

**“CLEANSING THE ACTOR”: AN APPROPRIATED ACTING  
METHODOLOGY UTILISING THE PERFORMANCE THEORIES OF  
JERZY GROTOWSKI IN A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT- A CASE  
STUDY OF *THE CLEANSING* (2011/2013)**

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research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are  
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I Brandon Michael Moulder declare that

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## ABSTRACT

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This dissertation focuses on my key research question, “How Grotowski’s performance theories and actor training could be adapted for use in developing my own appropriated acting methodology in post-apartheid South Africa”.

I have found that there is a gap in the Grotowskian research field in South Africa for a documented rehearsal process and production that examines how Grotowski’s performance theories/actor training around *Poor Theatre* (1957-1969), *Paratheatre* (1970-1975) and *Theatre of Sources* (1976-1982) can be appropriated and adapted to create a working acting methodology.

This documented rehearsal process is provided in this dissertation in the form of two case studies that detail the two phases of my theatre project *The Cleansing* (2011/2013), providing narratives of what the two productions looked like as well as a detailed analysis of each phases Grotowskian appropriated acting methodology. *The Cleansing* (2011/2013) is a culmination of my research and knowledge gathered during my university years towards creating a Grotowskian inspired production; the research and rehearsal process conducted during both productions provides valuable information that will aid future scholars in understanding and developing their own acting methodology using the theories of Jerzy Grotowski.

I frame these two case studies amongst an analysis of Athol Fugard’s *Orestes* (1971) and Mbongeni Ngema, Percy Mtwa and Barney Simon’s *Woza Albert!* (1983) as a means to demonstrate the adaptability of Grotowski’s performance theories/actor training in apartheid South Africa. Then further framing it in post-apartheid South Africa through an analysis of Fana Tshabalala’s *Indumba* (2013).

I conclude by offering insight into the further development of my appropriated acting methodology. I propose the development of further exercises and the evolution of the process, so as to keep it relevant to the times and build a repertoire of exercises that could aid future performers and young theatre makers.

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# INTRODUCTION

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This dissertation will focus on using a practice-led research framework to explore Polish born, Jerzy Grotowski's performance theories (specifically his actor training) and their relation to the development of my own appropriated acting methodology within a post-apartheid South African time frame. Particular historical attention will be paid towards a negotiation of the relevance and adaptability of Grotowski's performance theories/actor training in the 1970s and 1980s protest theatre movement in apartheid South Africa. This will culminate in a case study that examines the two phases of my own production *The Cleansing* (Phase One: 2011; Phase Two: 2013) providing the means through which to examine how Grotowski's performance theories/actor training were adapted for the purpose of constructing my appropriated acting methodology.

Chapter One is primarily a theoretical chapter that investigates the performance theories of Grotowski offering insight into the goals and aims of his theories and training. This will focus on his *Poor Theatre* phase (1957-1969), his *Paratheatre* phase (1970-1975) and his *Theatre of Sources* phase (1976-1982). These three phases will be referred to when discussing my own construction of an actor training methodology in my own work in *The Cleansing* (2011/2013).

Chapter Two follows on, examining how these performance theories laid out in Chapter One formed part of a South African theatre landscape in the 1970s and 1980s. Chapter Two offers up a discussion around the term embodiment, expressed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1998) and Michel Foucault (1998), as a means to analyse apartheid as a legislation of embodied laws. Setting up apartheid as an embodied legislation will allow for a discussion around the use of a physical style of theatre during the apartheid era and how this style of theatre was used to oppose the embodied laws of apartheid. An analysis of Athol Fugard's *Orestes* (1971) and Percy Mtwa, Mbongeni Ngema and Barney Simon's *Woza Albert!* (1983) will aid in understanding and unpacking the adaptability of Grotowski's performance theories through an examination into how these productions utilised and adapted Grotowski's theories and actor training in the creation of their productions. As a lead into the post-apartheid South African context, where I will situate my two phases of *The Cleansing* (2011/2013), I will provide also an analysis of the dance production *Indumba* (2013) choreographed by Fana Tshabalala of The Forgotten Angle Theatre Company (based in Johannesburg). This analysis will further negotiate the adaptability of Grotowski's theories and provide a comparative point when



discussing the second phase of *The Cleansing* (2013) in Chapter Four and particularly, the use of African ritual within *The Cleansing* (2011/2013).

Chapters Three and Four are joint chapters that focus on the case study around the two phases of my own theatre work, *The Cleansing* (2011/2013). I first provide an interrogation into the practice-led research methodology and how it has assisted me in setting up a framework through which I am able to analyse my own direction and theatre creation. Each of these two chapters focuses on providing a narrative account of each phase of *The Cleansing* (2011/2013) as a means to lay a foundation through which I can then unpack and expand on throughout the chapter. The two case studies examine my key research question of this dissertation (“How Grotowski’s performance theories and actor training could be adapted for use in developing my own appropriated acting methodology in post-apartheid South Africa”), providing possible and negotiated answers in the form of offering an analysis of both phases of the rehearsal process. This allows for a comparison of the two phases of *The Cleansing* (2011/2013) and provides an examination into the evolution of this appropriated acting methodology and how each phase’s process reflects an understanding and use of Grotowski’s performance theories and actor training.

The dissertation concludes by offering a few possible strategies towards the continued use of Grotowski in actor training in South Africa; evolving the exercises and methodologies laid out in this dissertation for the purpose of providing an open ended acting methodology that could, hopefully, be picked up by up and coming theatre makers in the future.

## CHAPTER ONE

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# INVESTIGATING THE PERFORMANCE THEORIES OF JERZY GROTOWSKI

### 1. Introduction

Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999) is one of the major theatre practitioners and theatre theorists of the 20th century. His theatrical ideas have extended well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century where they are still used and adapted today, both globally and in South Africa. Arguably this is because Grotowski's physical style of theatre is able to transcend language barriers and works towards the body being the primary means of communication within performance. His physical style of theatre pushes the actor to strip away social and cultural boundaries that have been imposed on him/her in a move away from the ideas of realist representational theatre. This physical style changed over the years according to Grotowski's own growth and development as a theatre practitioner, moving from his *Poor Theatre* phase from 1959-1970, to *Paratheatre* from 1970-1975, and his *Theatre of Sources Phase* from 1976-1982<sup>1</sup> (Ronald Grimes, 1982: 194). I will focus on these three phases within this chapter, seeking to investigate Grotowski's performance theories around them and how these theories and methodologies for actor training have been structured according to each phase. Reference will be made to contemporary theorists and theatre practitioners who have worked with and/or theorised around Grotowski's style, furthering an understanding of each of Grotowski's phases and the types of performer training associated with them.

A germane place to begin would be a short preface to the history of Poland. Grotowski developed his thinking out of post World War 2 Poland and this context will allow better insight into his thinking and views on theatre.

#### 1.1. Contextualising Post World War 2 Poland

Grotowski's writings, theories and theatrical ideas emerged post World War 2 in Poland at a time when both poverty and social and economic issues were high. Having been invaded by both Germany and the Soviet Union during World War 2, Poland underwent a massive shift

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<sup>1</sup> There are two other phases, namely 'objective drama' from 1983-1986 and 'art as a vehicle' from 1986 until Grotowski's death but for the purpose of this dissertation I will not be delving into these two phases.

in how the country was managed with the territory in Poland being divided amongst both Germany and the Soviet Union, with each of them having their own rules as to how their territory would be governed. Germany carried out the mass extermination of the Jewish people and used the Polish citizens within their territory as forced labour within the war industries. This was a part of the *Generalplan Ost*, a secret Nazi plan for the Germanization of conquered nations through ethnic cleansing (Website 1).

The Soviet Union sought to dismantle the Polish state and re-establish it in their own image by removing all signs of Polish existence. Their idea was that if they could erase the connection between the citizens and the Polish state and culture, then they could re-establish their territory in their own image. This re-establishment was called Sovietisation and involved: the disbanding of all political parties - leaving only the one that supported the views of the Soviet Union; the re-structuring of the schooling system to spread Soviet propaganda; the state ownership of all enterprises; and the withdrawal of Polish currency in favour of the rouble.

During this Nazi and Soviet take over, the resistance was being conducted underground and grew to the point where it was referred to as 'The Polish Underground State' (Joseph Garlinski, 1975: 220)<sup>2</sup>. The activities of this underground resistance movement not only conducted political and military activities but also embraced the Polish culture by publishing books and journals, opening underground theatres, organising concerts and exhibits and protecting works of art (Garlinski, 1975: 220)<sup>3</sup>. Keeping these cultural forms alive under the strict rule of both the Soviets and Germans allowed them to become a vital and expressive channel for resistance and freedom in post World War 2 Poland.

What was important in understanding Grotowski's emergence, was the Stalin era (1948-1956) of post World War 2 Poland. This era, like that of the Sovietisation of Soviet territories in World War 2, involved, "the process of subjugating Poland to the Soviet model" (Tony Kemp-Welch, 2006: 1262), and thus under the rule of Stalin, Poland was repressed again with very strict censorship rules against anything that did not conform to the Stalinist ideology. Social Realism became the norm for theatre in Poland during this era (Crowley, 1998). This style tended to focus on depicting an idealised version of the progress that socialism was making within Poland at the time rather than the impoverishment and social

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<sup>2</sup> 'The Polish Underground State' operated between the years 1939-1945

<sup>3</sup> All achievements of the 'The Polish Underground State' can be found in Joseph Garlinski's Journal article *The Polish Underground State(1939-45)* (1975).

and economic problems that Poland actually faced (Crowley, 1998). Any theatre production that did not adhere to these strict criteria was either censored or banned. Grotowski's distinct voice emerged under these conditions and, he was himself, an activist against the strict Stalinist rule. In an assemblage of the Union of Soviet Youth in 1957 Grotowski was one of the speakers and said:

People must understand that if they don't stop pouting, join in the life of the country, and work for the common cause, then we may expect a catastrophe, bloodshed and destruction, and a takeover of despotism. . . . No one can give us bread, civilization and freedom. We must make bread, just as we must make freedom and civilization happen. It's not true that one can hide away in one's private little world and go on living. . . . In our country, young people look forward to civilization, to a decent standard of living, to justice, to decision-making about their own lives, to technological progress. Ours is a road to civilization and freedom. (As quoted in Richard Gaffield-Knight, 1992)

Grotowski wanted to incite people to go on a journey to rebuild Poland and find freedom. He said, eighteen years later in 1975, outside of the fascism of both the Nazis and Soviets:

If I were ever to build the self-portrait of my dreams—at the very center would be a liberated life, the original state, freedom. . . . For me, freedom is connected with the supreme temptation. It exists for the individual, even if unaware of it. . . . Freedom is associated neither with freedom of choice, nor with sheer volunteerism—but with a wave, with giving oneself up to a huge wave, in accordance with one's desire. And when I speak of desire, it is like water in the desert or a gasp of air to someone who is drowning (As quoted in Knight, 1992)

This freedom that Grotowski speaks about here is what he wanted to achieve within his performers and his theatre, the idea of taking them back to their original state. As I move on to discuss *Poor Theatre*, *Paratheatre* and *Theatre of Source*, this statement will carry resonance into Grotowski's own vision and working method.

## 1.2. 'Ripening' the Actor

Jerzy Grotowski's development of his Theatre Laboratory can be attributed to his devotion to research into art and the actor's art (1968, 9). The work that was produced from this theatre training space became a way for Grotowski to put his research and thinking into practice.

Grotowski rejected the notion of developing a formula for creating his theatre work as he believed that ready-made methods bred clichés and lead to stereotypes, as performers seek 'How' to do something, for example, "How to pitch ones voice" and "How to speak or walk"

(1968:185). Grotowski's thinking led him to devise exercises through which performers would be able to negotiate their own personal limitations and discover their own obstacles, to which they would have to overcome.<sup>4</sup>

This negotiation of one's own personal limitations and overcoming obstacles is the foundation to understanding Grotowski's *Poor Theatre* phase. This phase ran between the years 1957-1969 and Grotowski described his work in this phase as, "The 'ripening' of the actor which is expressed by a tension towards the extreme, by a complete stripping down, by the laying bare of one's own intimacy" (1968:16). He wanted to rid the actor of the mental blocks that prevent his/her body and mind from working simultaneously, and, in Grotowski's own words, allow "Freedom from the time lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction" (1968:16). In this construction, he equates the inner impulse with the psyche and the outer reaction with physicality within performance<sup>5</sup>.

Grotowski argues that his performers needed to strip away the cultural and social symbols that inhibit them and reach into their unconscious to find what he calls the *Innermost Self* (1968:35), the self that houses our most painful memories and the self that one does not show to the world (Grotowski, 1968:35). I will examine this idea of the *Innermost Self* further when discussing the actor/spectator relationship and the term "holy actor", but it remains essential to understand the philosophy of *Poor Theatre* before moving to what Grotowski wanted from his performers in *Poor Theatre*, as it will allow for a better understanding of the workings of his theatre style/methodology.

Grotowski started with ridding the theatre of everything he felt was superfluous to the theatrical event; he called this mode of performing *Poor Theatre*. He claims that:

The theatre could exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects, etc. It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct 'live' communion. (Grotowski, 1968:19)

Grotowski's actor training instead focussed on creating these effects with the actors' body, voice, gestures and inner impulses. He used stationary light sources and played with shadows and spots (Grotowski, 1968:20). Instead of makeup and fake noses the actor was able to create a different facial mask through the use of his own facial expressions and muscles

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<sup>4</sup> These exercises will be discussed in the sub chapter 1.3.

<sup>5</sup> This notion will be looked at further under the term physical action in chapter 1.5.

(Grotowski, 1968:21). The costume had a connection with a particular character and could be transformed before the audience (Grotowski, 1968:21), and through the use of controlled gestures the actor could transform the floor into the sea and a table into a confessional (Grotowski, 1968:21). In the end, Grotowski said, the only thing that theatre needs in order to happen was a relationship between the actor and his audience (Slowiak & Cuesta, 2007:13).

### 1.2.1. The 'Holy' Relationship

The actor within this relationship is what Grotowski calls the “holy actor” (1968, 35), and their relationship to the audience is that of self-sacrifice in that they offer the innermost part of themselves on stage; they strip off their every day mask to reveal the vulnerable being underneath it (1968, 34). This mask is a facade that we as human beings put on; it is developed through culture and society which have dictated how one must behave in the world, and at the same time it is a comfort zone for us, allowing one to hide one's innermost feelings. Grotowski proposes the stripping away of this mask through self-penetration<sup>6</sup> to reveal the performers innermost feelings to the audience, so as to allow them to go on a similar process of self-penetration. Grotowski's thinking is that in order for the audience to engage in an act of self-penetration there needs to be a common ground between the performer and audience (1968, 42). This is found through attacking the collective complexes, the culturally conditioned wall, and embracing the representations collectives which are the innermost feelings inherent in every person (Grotowski, 1968:42). In order for the performer to reach this point, where they are able to sacrifice their *Innermost Self* to the audience, Grotowski believed they need to undergo intense training.

### 1.3. Deconstructing Actor Training

This section will seek to examine the workings of Grotowski's actor training, not just an explanation of all his exercises<sup>7</sup>, but rather an examination of how he wanted his performers to develop through the training. This actor training develops out of the social and political context of post World War 2 Poland where Polish citizens and performers were stripped of their national identities and told how to view the world by Stalin, and theatre focussed on spreading the political and ideological viewpoints of Stalin. What was required for Grotowski was a training style/method that could give performers the ability to regain a sense of

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<sup>6</sup> The idea of self-penetration as it is used here refers to the actor's ability to analyse themselves psychologically and find where their insecurities lie.

<sup>7</sup> A full account of Grotowski's exercises can be found in his book *Towards a Poor Theatre* (1968, 101-173).

themselves and strip themselves of useless insecurities and fears so that when an audience watched these performers on stage they were able to undergo a similar process of self-analysis and regain a sense of their own identities and views on the world.

Grotowski's actor training, like his performance style, is very physical in nature, involving feats of strength, agility, flexibility and balance such as somersaults, headstands, elbow stands and various rolls. Most importantly though Grotowski stresses that, "The actor must justify every detail of this training with a precise image" (1968, 103). The image activates the psyche of the performer and generates a physical impulse within their bodies that they should act on without hesitation. It is within this hesitation that the performer can judge the strengths and weaknesses of their own bodies, in that if the body resists the impulse then one needs to find where this resistance lies and work on overcoming it. Grotowski argues that, "The actor should be able to decipher all the problems of his body which are accessible to him" (1968, 35).

Grotowski calls this *via negative*, which focuses on the eradication of blocks rather than conventional acting methodologies which give their performers what he calls a "bag of tricks" (1968, 19). These bodily resistances are not only the result of one's body not being supple or strong enough but also the result of psychological blocks such as fear. This fear becomes important within the actor training, in that Grotowski made his performers face these fears in the form of taking risks. Such risks can be found within the corporal exercises.

### 1.3.1. Corporal Exercises

The corporal exercises involve a range of headstands, shoulder stands, rolls, somersaults and leaps that developed the flexibility of the spinal column and allowed the actor to test the range of the body's equilibrium (Lisa Wolford, 2010:208). The key to this exercise is not to rush to find your balance but let your body find its own natural equilibrium amongst the various postures (Grotowski, 1968:156). Through the methodical nature of the exercise the performer is able to decipher which muscles are being used to stabilise the body as well as where the balance is situated in each different posture. Beyond this though, Grotowski suggests that, "A primary purpose of the corporal exercises was to help the actor regain a sense of trust in his/her own organism" (As quoted in Wolford, 2010:208). This trust is what allows the performer to work without fear, in that if one trusts that the body is able to land a somersault or correctly perform a headstand then the body will not hesitate.

This sense of freedom also emerges through spontaneity and discipline; Ryszard Cieslak makes this clear when he says, “We should not improvise without a structure, but pre-construct the basic outline” (As quoted in Thomas Richards, 1995: 11). This structure is what prevents the performers from reaching a state of chaos on stage. Grotowski calls this idea of spontaneity and discipline *conjunctio oppositorum*:

a conjunction of opposites, asserting that the actor’s mastery of an established structure –his or her ability to accomplish something, whether a performance score or a sequence of codified movements that is fixed in its details –paradoxically allows for a kind of freedom. (As quoted in Welford, 2010:211)

This statement seems contradictory but makes sense in relation to Grotowski’s work with the *Plastiques*.

### 1.3.2. *Plastique* Exercises

The *Plastiques* (Grotowski, 1968:107) involved a series of movements that the actors would learn to perform precisely, for example walking rhythmically and rotating your arms. Once the performer is able to do this without thinking about it consciously then he/she can begin to transform these exercises. Grotowski asserts that:

If the actor performs the plastiques by directing himself with the conscious mind, treating the body like a puppet guided by a puppet master, then it is impossible for the actor to engage the body-memory. If, however, the actor begins to work in such a way that s/he maintains the precise details but does not consciously manipulate sequence or rhythm of the plastic elements, ‘almost like taking the details from the air’, then it is possible to awaken the body-life. (As quoted in Welford, 2010:211)

This is the transformation that Grotowski talks about, the ability to unlock the body memory and manipulate the sequence unconsciously through holding on to the structure or the “precise details”, and through the repetition of this sequence, one will begin to manipulate and alter it without thinking about it. Through the repetition of this exercise one learns it mechanically and through this mechanical delivery it forms a part of our body’s memory that we are then able to manipulate through varying the rhythm and changing the order of the movements (Welford, 2010:211). This manipulation can not be done consciously, one has to find the organic or natural flow of the body that will begin to manipulate the movements unconsciously. This unconscious manipulation and organic flow works in much the same way as the body finding its natural equilibrium during the headstands of the corporal exercises. A working example of *Organicity* (Stephen Wang, 2012) will be provided in



chapter 1.5.2 to aid in understanding the *Plastiques* ability to train the body to manipulate actions unconsciously.

### 1.3.3. Voice and Breathing

Grotowski states that, “The actor’s respiratory and vocal apparatus must be infinitely more developed than that of the man on the street” (1968, 35). Like the actor’s physicality, his voice should be able to produce any sounds or intonations that they want it to without taking any strain. Grotowski proposes various exercises that aid one in developing their vocal apparatus, however for the purpose of this dissertation I will not recount these exercises but rather provide a brief look into the aspects of one’s voice that Grotowski wanted to develop.

The resonators are the foundation for Grotowski’s work on the voice (1968, 123), in that it provides one with the possibility of various intonations and sounds using the different resonators, for example using the head resonator will cause your voice to go up in pitch whereas your stomach resonator will cause your voice to go down in pitch. Grotowski requires of his performers that they be able to use every resonator in the body as well as be able to combine them, but most importantly utilise the whole body as a resonator which he calls a “total resonator” (1968, 123). Grotowski has one rule regarding vocal exercises and it is, “Bodily activity comes first, and then vocal expression” (1968, 151), this is particularly important when working on his animal themed exercises.

Grotowski used various animal images as associations for his performers when working on their voice. For example, in the “Tiger” exercise the performers are taunted by Grotowski and they respond by roaring a piece of text back at him (1968, 145). This does two things, it releases the body of all timidity which allows one to utilise the voice to its full capacity and it activates the guttural resonator (1968, 146). The timidity is released due to one taking on the physicality of the aggressive tiger and committing to it completely, which allows the body and mind to engage fully without resistance. This aids in the expression of the voice, in that if there are resistances in the body then the voice will be affected, due to the voice emerging from the body.

There are various other vocal exercises that he utilises but they all share the same premise as the physical exercises, in that the exercises were not meant as a means on how to do something but rather to negotiate your own vocal development. By this I mean that when Grotowski, for example, tells you to mimic the everyday sounds around you, he does not tell

you how to do it but rather allows the performers the freedom to figure it out for themselves. Grotowski would only step in if there were any vocal issues that he felt needed to be corrected, such as one's larynx being closed (1968, 119). This way of working extends to one's breathing as well in that Grotowski believed that:

Breathing is an organic and spontaneous process and the exercises are not intended to submit it to a strict control but to correct any anomalies, nevertheless retaining its spontaneity. (1968, 119)

Over-training one's breathing can cause more anomalies than one had from the start in that it forces the breath to go against its natural method and thus to build up resistances.

All the exercises mentioned above formed a major part of Grotowski's *Poor Theatre* phase as well as the training that was undertaken within this phase. Moving ahead a few years though into his *Paratheatre* (1969-78) and *Theatre of Sources* phase (1976-82), one sees a shift in Grotowski's mindset away from traditional theatre spaces towards the outdoor environment and with it a change in the way that he trained his performers.

#### 1.4. Experimenting Beyond Theatre

I will look at *Paratheatre* and the *Theatre of Sources* in relation to each other. I acknowledge that these are two very different phases and that the *Theatre of Sources* phase does have a vast array of cultural knowledge and negotiation associated with it; with reference to Grotowski's work with the Haitian and Indian communities (Richard Schechner & Lisa Wolford, 1997:275-280) but I will only be focussing on both these phases as they pertain to work within the outdoor environment as this is what I will pick up on when discussing the working method behind *The Cleansing* (2011/2013).

*Paratheatre* came about due to the theatre, as in the space, reinforcing the division between spectator and actor. Grotowski states that, "It is the need for approval from others that contributes to the fact that the actor remains armed." (1973, 114) Grotowski also says:

[I] believe that the motives which have led us to engage in theatre are not pure. Some want to pursue theatre as a commercial enterprise, others want to be acclaimed by the public or gain a certain status, or receive gifts from high society. (1973, 114)

It is this search for audience approval that causes the performers to remain armed and inhibited on stage. Grotowski states that one needs to accept oneself and not seek the audience's approval (1973, 120). His main concern being though, is that we as human beings

have given up on living (1973, 115). Routine has taken over our daily lives, causing our senses to become nullified, and we follow the rules imposed on us by our society so that we are accepted; we begin to hate ourselves and anyone who shows any spark of life (1973,115). For this reason Grotowski began speaking about the death of words such as theatre, performance, spectator and actor (Schechner & Wolford, 1997:210) and began his journey towards the *Paratheatrical* phase, which is described as an encounter or “meetings” between people<sup>8</sup>.

These “meetings” often took place in the outdoors favouring pastoral settings-forests, meadows, hilltops (Schechner & Wolford, 1997:211) in a move away from the falseness and rigidity of society, in the hopes that people will begin to reform the lost connection with nature that used to be, according to Grotowski, inherent in people’s bodies.

This search towards the connection with nature can be better understood in relation to the *Theatre of Sources* phase. The *Theatre of Sources* focuses on just doing things such as going on long walks, where one would walk under foliage, walk through waterfalls, lie on the ground and watch fish (Schechner & Wolford, 1997:272). Never at any point would the participants reason about what they are doing, they just had “to do”. Arguably this could stem from our contemporary world view where everything we do is done for a reason and we never take time to stop or slow down. Grotowski states that the participants have to find their own inner silence while on these walks (Schechner & Wolford, 1997:266). He calls this “the movement which is repose” (Schechner & Wolford, 1997:265), meaning that moment when your body and mind find stillness, yet you are still moving and doing actions, the moment of just being when you are most open to viewing the world as something new and fresh every day. Grotowski describes this as the awakening and provides an example of someone who searches for this “movement which is repose” for a long time but the moment that they give up all hope and throw themselves down to sleep, without thinking of the next day, is the moment that they awaken and find the “movement which is repose” (Schechner & Wolford, 1997: 269-270). This un-named person that Grotowski refers to found the “movement which is repose” because they were no longer thinking of the past or the future, they were living in the present at that specific point in time, like a child who steps into the garden for the first time and observes everything anew.

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<sup>8</sup> An example of these meetings will be provided in chapter 1.5.3.

From here, I will interrogate a selection of performance practices and methodologies from theatre makers, practitioners, and theatre researchers, who have engaged with Grotowski's methods.

## 1.5. Expanding Grotowski

### 1.5.1 *Poor Theatre*

Earlier I quoted Grotowski in stating that he wanted his performers to allow, "Freedom from the time lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction" (Grotowski, 1968:16). This idea of the impulse already being an outer reaction stems from Grotowski's understanding and work with physical actions.

Physical action is defined by Sharon Carnicke, an expert on the Stanislavskian system for actor training, as thus, "This method assumes that emotional life can be more easily aroused and fixed for performance through work on the physical life of the role than through emotional recall" (1998:177). Thomas Richards, a major disciple of Grotowski and author of *At Work With Grotowski on Physical Actions* (1995), offers an example of this in which he describes how Cieslak, performer in the Theatre Laboratory, transformed himself into a crying child; using nothing more than the physicality of that upset child he was able to create the child-like scream (1995:13). Simplifying this notion further Sonia Moore, an expert and teacher of the Stanislavskian system, says:

If I raise a glass, which is a physical act, I do it for some inner or psychological reason: I may be thirsty or I may want to see what is in it. Every inner experience is expressed through a physical action.  
(1965:91)

This can be expressed within the above example of Cieslak, in that the physical action is the child-like scream and the inner experience would be his own physical memory of when he was a crying child. This negotiation within physical actions of the psychophysical connection is the cornerstone to Grotowski's actor training in that every exercise is developed to not only strengthen the body and make it physically supple but to find and eliminate the body's resistances.

These bodily resistances and physical and mental blocks to which he alludes are the products of society and culture and I find that this can best be understood through gender theorists, Rachel Alsop & Annette Fitzsimons. Alsop & Fitzsimons in *Bodily Imaginaries* (2002) state, using Judith Butlers understanding, that:

What we count as matter, as material, as nature or as given is itself a product of a particular mode of conceptualising, modes of conceptualising, which are thereby tied up with relations of power. (2002, 169)

Through this, what we see as being ‘natural’ or biological in terms of the body undergoes a process of social construction, a process that begins to construct discourses around how we see the world and how we see ourselves within in the world. For example, we only understand the concept of ‘natural’ because society has dictated to us what is ‘natural’ and we see our own bodies as being less masculine or feminine because society has constructed discourses as to what constitutes being masculine or feminine. Grotowski argues that this is the culturally conditioned wall that keeps us from experiencing the world directly (As quoted in Robert Findlay & Halina Filipowicz, 1986:204) and Alsop & Fitzsimons further reiterate on this idea of masculine and feminine by saying, “The body is regulated by dominant discourses within society which prescribes norms for the male, but more insistently, the female body” (2002, 167). This view of discourses aiding in the social construction of our body can be examined through the theories of Jacques Lacan who argues that, “Our understanding of our bodies and physical surroundings is shaped by language” (As quoted in Dani Cavallaro, 1998: 81), and:

[l]anguage is not simply words but rather all the symbols and structures that constitute a particular culture: social codes, conventions, laws, institutions, structures of kinship and gender roles. (As quoted in Cavallaro, 1998:81)

The issue with this idea of language is that it is limited in that it cannot express fully our fantasies and desires and therefore these fantasies and desires must be repressed within our consciousness and become a part of our unconscious (1998, 82), the same unconscious that Grotowski wants his performers to delve into and find their *Innermost Self*.

### 1.5.2. Actor Training

*Organicity* (Wang, 2012) becomes very important if one is to understand Grotowski’s actor training. It is found in every aspect of it: finding the natural equilibrium of the body in the corporal exercises, the natural transformation of the movement in the *Plastiques*, and that moment when all the exercises are being done through impulse and not thinking. Stephen Wang describes this *Organicity* through an example of moving one’s joint: as you begin to move it you become aware of the feeling of it and how other parts of your body have begun to activate, then through amplifying and distilling this movement of the joint and other parts

of your body you should begin to have a sense that the movement wants to take them somewhere in the space (2012). When you reach this point, it is the organic<sup>9</sup> impulses within the body that are stimulating it and you should just “let it happen” and explore how you breathe physically with the movements and how the body relates to the space around it, manipulating the initial movements unconsciously. Keeping in mind that if the body resists these organic impulses, you need to ask yourselves why? Where does this resistance stem from in the body? And how can one overcome this resistance? These are the questions that will allow the *Plastiques* to not only teach performers spontaneity in discipline but also where their own personal resistances lie. This idea of the ‘organic impulses’ is then carried over into Grotowski’s *Paratheatre* and *Theatre of Sources* phases where the performers have to connect with their bodies on a natural level and use their organic impulses to react and add to the action happening around them.

### 1.5.3. *Paratheatre* and *Theatre of Sources*

Richard Mennen, a researcher around Grotowski’s *Paratheatrical* projects, acknowledges that Grotowski attempted to strip away the audience/actor division through arranging the audience in such a way that they became a part of the action, but argues that:

At the point when this elimination had been perfected by the company (in a relative sense, of course), an implicit contradiction became evident. The actors had worked to remove the masks, disguises, defences, roles, etc., that divided them from each other, but relationship to the audience was that of a role- an actor. (1975, 60)

Although the audience was integrated into the action, they were still spectators and the actors were still performing for them and therefore the division existed. Richard Mennen provides an explanation to this when he says that the performers could “not-perform” during rehearsals but had to perform during performance (1975, 60). The difference being that as soon as an audience is added to the process, the actors are performing, and as I have alluded to previously, this thinking of theatre began Grotowski’s journey towards the *Paratheatrical* phase.

The *Paratheatre* phase, as well as the *Theatre of Sources* phase, have both been defined by Ronald Grimes, a theorist of the *Theatre of Sources* phase and *Paratheatre* phase of

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<sup>9</sup> Allen J. Kuharski states that, “Grotowski defined his work as “organic” rather than “natural.” In the director’s terms, the “natural” refers to the world of received social convention, involving realities that precede the performance composition.”

Grotowski's work. Grimes defines the *Theatre of Sources* as, "Being the search for something that is "other" than the interpersonal such as nature or god or spirit" (1982, 195). Earlier I used an example of a child stepping into the garden for the first time as a reference to how we used to view the world. This is further expanded on by Findlay and Filipowicz. They state that:

The child's experience of the garden is a primary one. The child sees everything fresh, purely. As adults, we are closed off by our computer-like memory when we enter the garden. The garden seems to us like any other or just the way it was the last time we were there. (1986, 204-205)

Grotowski would call this the culturally conditioned wall that prevents us from experiencing the world directly (Findlay & Filipowicz, 1986:204) and we need to revert back to a child's view of the world so that we may see the world through an unfiltered lens. This was the task of the *Theatre of Sources*: to reform that connection between body and nature so that we may find whatever it is that we are searching for.

Grimes defines *Paratheatre* as, "The search to disarm oneself in the presence of others and through this find "bodily sincerity" " (1982, 195). This searching within *Paratheatre* was done through the "meetings" or encounters between people. Richard Schechner quotes Leszek Kolodziejczyk<sup>10</sup> in saying in relation to the *Paratheatrical* 'meetings' that, "It consists of a common isolation by a group of people in a place far removed from the outside world, and an attempt to build a kind of genuine meeting among human beings" (1997, 210). The idea behind these meetings being that as the participants became accustomed to each other they would begin to rid themselves of distrust and mutual fears, which would lead them to, "Disarm themselves in the presence of others", if one was to use Ronald Grimes *Paratheatrical* definition (1982, 195).

Jenna Kumiega<sup>11</sup> provides us an example of one of these meetings called *The Way*. It begins with a forty eight hour trek through the forest towards the castle ruins where the main action takes place (Schechner & Wolford, 1997:244). This is where the participants would eat, sleep and work. Jenna Kumiega states:

As the people seated in the annex became aware of the sounds of physical activity - running feet, dancing rhythms, perhaps drums - they were gradually drawn inside. There was an absolute vocal silence in the work room. All impulse – for expression, contact, physical endeavour, disarmament, exposure – was

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<sup>10</sup> Participant in Grotowski's paratheatrical projects.

<sup>11</sup> An active researcher into the work of Grotowski.

channelled into dynamic physical action, according to the needs of those taking part. (As quoted in Schechner & Wolford, 1997:244)

The participants were allowed to join these sessions at any time as well as leave at anytime and for the duration of them there would be no sense of structure or rules on how to behave within them. This allowed the participants freedom to search for their own individual response amongst the anarchy of movement around them (Schechner & Wolford, 1997:244). If this anarchy and the environment in which the session takes place are allowed to permeate the body of the participant, it can disarm him/her and strip away the discourses that define and restrict their bodies through a sense of ritualisation. This ritualisation occurs when the fire in the room and the beating of the drums and the presence of other moving bodies pushes the participant into a trance-like state where they can negotiate their own *Innermost Self* (1968, 35) and through this negotiation find what Grimes calls, “bodily sincerity”(1982, 195).

## 1.6. Conclusion

Grotowski’s performance theories, as evidenced above, have evolved and changed over the years and each of them can be summarised in a few key words. *Poor Theatre* is the art of stripping away all cultural and social boundaries imposed on performers, *Paratheatre* evolved out of *Poor Theatre* taking away the idea of an audience and replacing performances with ‘meetings’ whereby everyone would join in and build on the action. The *Theatre of Sources* then takes it one step further and seeks to reform the body’s connection with nature through finding the “movement which is repose” (Schechner & Wolford, 1997:265)<sup>12</sup>.

Grotowski says:

I am talking of the method, I am speaking of the surpassing of limits of a confrontation, of a process of self-knowledge and, in a certain sense, of a therapy. Such a method must remain open - its very life depends on this condition - and is different for each individual. This is how it should be, for its intrinsic nature demands that it be individual. (1968, 131)

This individuality within Grotowski’s training style and the favouring of a self-analysis form of training is what makes this form of actor training very adaptable and versatile, two things to note as I move now to investigate how and why these methodologies have been adopted into a politically charged South African theatre of the 1980s, our own post-apartheid context, and further within my own productions of *The Cleansing* (2011/2013).

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<sup>12</sup> These performance theories will be refereed back to in the coming chapters as they construct the theoretical framework that underpins each of the chapters.



## CHAPTER TWO

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### LOCATING GROTOWSKI'S PERFORMANCE THEORIES IN APARTHEID AND POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

#### 2. Introduction

From this body of knowledge on Grotowski's performance theories, discussed in Chapter One, Chapter Two will move on to draw links between these performance theories and the emergence of a critical South African theatre that developed in the 1970s/1980s and within the post-apartheid era. A brief overview of the South African context during the apartheid era, specifically the 1970s and 1980s, will be provided so as to allow a framework through which to investigate why and how Grotowski's style was used and adapted within this era. Through an analysis of both Athol Fugard's *Orestes* (1971) and Mbongeni Ngema, Percy Mtwa and Barney Simon's *Woza Albert!* (1983), I will begin to lay a foundation through which to investigate how Grotowski's performance theories have been interpreted, and practically re-imagined, in a 1970s/1980s South African context.

Moving into the post-apartheid era, and through a comparative analysis of Fana Tshablala's dance theatre piece *Indumba* (2013), I will contextualise my own theatrical production *The Cleansing* (2011/2013). Both *Indumba* (2013) and *The Cleansing* (2011/2013) speak to a Grotowskian influence in a post-apartheid South African context. Although *Indumba* (2013) was performed after *The Cleansing* (2013), the physical style of *Indumba* (2013) clearly resonates with my own production as the idea of "cleansing" the performers, seen in both physical theatre works, creates a valuable comparative analysis synergy.

#### 2.1. Apartheid: An Embodied System

The 20<sup>th</sup> century in South Africa saw the official legislated implementation of the system of apartheid by the National Party in 1948. This system of economic and racial segregation ran between the years of 1948 to 1994. I will primarily focus on the period between the 1970s and 1980s to provide the sociopolitical context to which the theatrical works, *Orestes* (1971) and *Woza Albert!* (1983) emerged, as well as focusing on apartheid as a system of rules that governed, primarily, the black South African body. This will be done in an attempt to

contextualise notions of ‘embodiment’ and how the apartheid laws, can be argued to have become ‘embodied’ within the black South African body.

### 2.1.1. Deconstructing Embodiment

In Chapter 1.5.1, I discussed how the body is regulated through societal and cultural discourses and how these discourses construct a filtered view of the world and a filtered view of us in the world. Dani Cavallaro, author of *The Body for Beginners* (1998), discusses this filtered view of the world saying:

Our images of the world are not slices of life, cut out of a stable reality ordained by the gods. They are constructions, or artificial organizations of meaning. Neither the body, nor the mind ‘reflect’ reality. Rather, they represent it according to both conscious and unconscious codes and conventions. (1998, 96)

As expressed by Cavallaro, there is no one realistic view of the world but rather endless ever shifting socially and culturally constructed bodies that view the world according to codes and conventions. These codes or signs are mediated, again, through society and culture and are the associated meanings that we begin to read into the world around us. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, an existential philosopher on human experience, expands on this notion of the socially and culturally constructed body by saying:

The Body is primarily a way of being in the world. It is a form of lived experience which is fluid and ever-shifting. And it is also a way of interacting with one’s environment, of shaping it and being shaped by it. (As quoted in Cavallaro, 1998:88)

Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the body is one that embraces fluidity and the ever-shifting nature of the lived experience of the body. With this comes the ability of the body to shape how it interacts with the environment and is, in turn, shaped by it. For example, Merleau-Ponty states that, “The form of an object depends on how the body perceives it” (As quoted in Cavallaro, 1998:88), however, how the body perceives this object is informed by the social and cultural discourses apparent in each individuals environment. In terms of Cavallaro’s thinking in the previous paragraph the socially and culturally constructed body sets up codes and conventions that would inform our view of the object.

In the above quote Merleau-Ponty says, “The body is primarily a way of being in the world” (As quoted in Cavallaro, 1998:88). At its simplest understanding this is what embodiment is. It is the way in which our bodies inhabit and experience the world for example the way we walk, eat, talk and sit is all an embodiment of social and cultural discourses dictating to us

how we should experience the world, being told to sit up straight or eat with your knife and fork. Alsop & Fitzsimons argue that the body responds to the world through habitual action and, “The body simply responds appropriately to the world by means of intentional acts, such as opening doors, picking up objects, scratching our nose, typing, playing an instrument” (2002, 172). These examples reflect an unconscious and learnt embodiment in that you open a door because it is closed and you scratch your nose because it is itchy; it happens habitually and unconsciously. You then learn to play an instrument and learn to type until it becomes habitual and also happens unconsciously.

Lliane Loots, a South African dance critic and writer, provides an understanding of Merleau-Ponty’s theories around the body that states, “That our very being is not fixed but impermanent and this gives rise to an understanding that human existence is unthinkable or unimaginable in separation from the body” (2010, 110). The body is the primary means of experiencing the world directly, thus it is unthinkable to imagine the one without the other or to understand how the world is experienced without examining the body in relation to this experience; a constructed body, a body that is layered with social and cultural discourses that transform our experience of the world. The body so far has been examined as a socially and culturally constructed being; however the body also has the ability to resist these social and cultural discourses. Michel Foucault, the French poststructural philosopher, is important in relation to this examination of the body’s ability to resist.

Foucault speaks about power and its use in the construction of the body, specifically how we understand what is normal through an understanding of what is abnormal. This abnormal body is constructed through what Foucault calls the invisible powers of the modern society (Cavallaro, 1998:94). Cavallaro, when writing about Foucault’s ideas, provides an understanding of these invisible powers as:

The power that defines us by constantly gazing at our bodies is everywhere: in the form of moral and religious rules, legal systems and mass-produced images, for example. These laws and images look at us, even if no one particular human being can be spotted behind them, because they embody ideas of cultural acceptability. We know that when we fail to conform to those ideas, we become unacceptable (deviant, irregular, undesirable). (1998:103)

The rules and legal systems work as a means to construct the body’s view of what is right or wrong, threatening imprisonment or being seen as abnormal if they are not complied with.

Sally Banes - a dance historian, writer and critic – adopts a Foucauldian perspective when discussing the ideas of cultural acceptability, saying:

Culture wreaks utter tyranny on individual bodies...where bodies are disciplined, moulded, re-arranged by dominant powers, which simultaneously promote the illusion that people are 'free' to construct their own bodies. (As quoted in Loots, 2010:107)

The illusion of freedom stems from the unconscious workings of the cultural and social discourses. We are born into this world and as we grow we are engrained with the discourses of what is right and wrong and are made to think that we have to control our bodies so we are seen as normal and if we don't then we are made to feel guilty and ashamed (Cavallaro, 1998:95). Foucault, however, never sees the body as a victim to these social and cultural discourses, rather he offers an examination of the body as a site of struggle, he says:

There is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite another discourse that runs counter to it. Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can run different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy. (As quoted in Loots, 2010:108)

Foucault, here, opens up 'the body' and articulates it as a site of possible resistance against the dominant discourses being imposed on it. Loots attempts to unpack Foucault's notion above arguing that the reasoning behind the body's ability to resist dominant discourses is due to subjectivity, in that privileging one discourse over another allows possibility for resistance and counter-discourse (2010, 108). Cavallaro states that objectivity is a myth and that there is no one way of representing reality (1998, 97) thus proposing a subjective view of the world that gives us the ability to privilege and choose one discourse over another.

Merleau-Ponty's theories provide an insight through which to examine how, for example, the apartheid laws have worked on a physical level and became embodied within the black South African body.

By the same thinking, Foucault's notion of the body as a site of struggle, allows for another dimension in relation to my discussion around apartheid as an embodied system. It provides the opportunity to examine the black South African body not as a victim of the apartheid system but a site of struggle that opposed the dominant discourses being imposed on it by the laws and legislation of apartheid.

### 2.1.2. Embodied Legislation

The birth of the system of the 1948 Apartheid laws was a means for the National Party to hold control over the economic and social system of South Africa and to assert white economic power and ownership. At apartheid's core though, was an ever changing and expanding legislation that evolved to enforce the segregation of the different races, territorial separation and police repression<sup>13</sup>. For example if one looks at the The Population Registration Act of 1950, races were classified by one of three and these weren't only determined by your skin colour but also your speech, habits, education and demeanour (Website 2). The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953 also stated that there would be allocated amenities for the different race groups and the quality of such amenity would be determined by your racial classification (Website 2). The Bantu Education Act, Act No 47 of 1953 then implemented the separation of the educational systems to which the Black students were only taught skills that would benefit them in their homelands and teach them to work in labour jobs under whites (Website 2).

The laws enforced by that of the apartheid legislation was premised on affording white South Africans with every possible level of right and economic access, while black South Africans were denied all social, economic and political rights rendering them without any real 'citizenship' within their own birth country. How these laws worked, though, is the focal point for understanding how the apartheid system operated on a physical level. Utilising Merleau-Ponty's understanding of 'embodiment' (Cavallaro, 1998:88) as a way of experiencing the world, the apartheid laws can begin to be seen as a way to control black South Africans embodied experience of the world around them, through dictating where they could walk, who they could talk to and where they could live<sup>14</sup>.

Through a Foucauldian understanding (Cavallaro, 1998:94-95), each law could possibly be seen to set up discourses around what it means to be black in South Africa and these discourses would be seen as representing the dominant power of the apartheid system attempting to construct, mould and discipline the black South African body. Loots further expands on this notion of the constructed body, saying:

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<sup>13</sup> The summarised legislation can be found in Elizabeth S. Landis. Apartheid Legislation. *Africa Today* Vol. 4, No. 6, South Africa: Alternatives to Disaster? (Nov. - Dec., 1957), pp. 45-48.

<sup>14</sup> This dissertation does not deal with the history of apartheid nor is it a critique of the system. I merely seek to provide a brief context through which to analyse the theatre that was developing in the 1970s and 1980s in South Africa.

The visceral body (the flesh) is often encoded by cultural practices, social and racial constructions and gendered conditions of use and reception - all of which form layer upon layer of texts that convey certain meanings and power operations. (2010, 107)

In the case of the apartheid system, this system becomes the writer of these layers of text, the laws and legislation act as a kind of language<sup>15</sup> that becomes embodied within black South Africans that dictates how they should experience the world and also how they are to be viewed by the world around them. For example, The Mixed Marriage Bill of 1937 prohibited the marriage between people of different races and the Group Areas Act of 1950 demarcated areas where different population groups were allowed to work and live. Apartheid South Africa, by the thinking above, forms parallels to that of Poland under Stalin's rule in that black South Africans, like the Polish people under Stalin's rule, were repressed, there movements were controlled and they were told how they had to behave<sup>16</sup>. Within both cases there was also resistance, which is what I will discuss now in relation to Apartheid in the 1970s and 1980s

## 2.2. Resistance to the Apartheid System: 1970s – 1980s

The constantly changing and subtle evolution of the 46 year apartheid system in South Africa endured much resistance. This resistance focused on opposing the embodied laws and legislation, reflecting a Foucauldian notion that the body has the ability to resist the dominant discourses imposed on it, situating the body as a site of struggle against its social and cultural circumstances and not a victim of it (Cavallaro, 1998:103). What follows is not a comprehensible list of all the resistance movements over the 46 years of Apartheid governance, but is rather an attempt to establish an evolution in the scale of the resistance and setting up the context of the 1970s and 1980s through which to analyse the theatrical works of *Orestes* (1971) and *Woza Albert!* (1983).

The 1950s saw the rise of the non-violent resistance which included the Defiance Campaign (1952), where black South Africans would deliberately break the law in order to flood the prison system and hopefully draw the apartheid laws into the eyes of the public so as to force the government to abolish the laws (Website 3); the Freedom Charter (1955) which was a document stating the demands of ordinary South Africans for a just and free society (Website

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<sup>15</sup> Language as used in this context refers to the understanding of this term expressed by Cavallaro (1998, 7) as being the organisation of the body according to beliefs.

<sup>16</sup> Poland under Stalin's rule is discussed in Chapter 1.1.

3) ; and the women's resistance which involved the mass walk in 1956 of twenty thousand women into the union buildings in Pretoria to oppose the unjust pass laws (Website 3). The 1960s then saw an evolution of the resistance towards an armed struggle after sixty-nine people were killed in the Sharpeville massacre on the 21 March 1960. Members of the Pan Africanist Congress on the 21 March 1960 were to stage a non-violent protest against the unjust pass laws; they gathered people from the area of Sharpeville and, unarmed, made their way to the police station where the intention was to surrender themselves for refusing to carry pass books as an act of protest (Website 3). A scuffle broke out and the police began shooting the unarmed protestors killing sixty-nine of them and wounding over one hundred and eighty (Website 3). This sparked the formation of two military wings willing to use violence and sabotage to overthrow the government. The African National Congress (ANC) set up the *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (*Spear of the Nation*) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) set up Poqo and between the years of 1961 to 1963 over two hundred acts of sabotage were carried out as well as the training of people for the purpose of violent revolution (Website 3). Both these military wings, as well as the ANC and PAC, came under immense pressure in the 1960s due to the State of Emergency<sup>17</sup> that saw a lot of their key figures either banned, jailed or in exile (Website 3).

The 1970s saw a major turning point in the resistance against apartheid with the rise of the Black Consciousness (BC) Movement led by Steve Biko<sup>18</sup>. BC believed in the pride of being black and the determination that blacks should end their dependence on whites (Website 3).

T.Philemon Wakashe, a theatre researcher, argues that:

Although Black Consciousness helped students and others to see a goal, it also made them face the obstacles. Blacks had to prepare themselves for the struggle, they had to define themselves in their own terms, and they had to rid themselves of their sense of inferiority resulting from deliberate oppression, denigration, and derision. (1986, 38)

Biko believed that the only way to successfully integrate black South Africans back into society would be to recognise the integrity in each of the black groups within South Africa; an integrity that was blurred through the white oppression on the blacks (Wakashe, 1986:38). As the above quote says, they needed to rid themselves of inferiority. The movement evolved over the years and through the brutal repression of its leaders by the National Party, were

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<sup>17</sup> The state of emergency gave the President of South Africa the ability to rule by decree, to heighten the powers of both SADF and SAP, and to restrict and censor any reportage of political unrest (Website 4).

<sup>18</sup> Steve Biko was a medical student who formed the South African Students Organisation, an opposition to the government and the mainly white National Union of South African Students (Website 3).

forced to reshape into a vehicle of artistic expression (Wakashe, 1986:37). Bhekizizwe Peterson, professor in African literature at Wits University, says that:

In the Seventies Black Consciousness took on board a number of themes including Black initiative, self-definition, determination and liberation. A significant cultural focus ran through all these objectives, and cultural practices were accorded a prominent political role within the movement. (1990:233)

Anti-apartheid black resistance theatre was another practice that formed a major political role in the movement<sup>19</sup>.

On the resistance front, the 1970s saw one of the biggest challenges to the apartheid system in the form of the Soweto Uprising of 1976. On the 16 June 1976, twenty thousand students marched through Soweto protesting the use of Afrikaans in schools (Website 3). Police opened fire on them killing, amongst others, thirteen year old Hector Pieterse. The students responded violently and unrest spread throughout the country (Website 3). Not only did this uprising cause countrywide unrest but also international revulsion against South Africa after images of police firing on the unarmed student protestors were released internationally, exposing the National Party's brutality.

The 1970s was the era of the Black Consciousness Movement but also an era of helping strip away the inferiority imposed on black South Africans by the white government in the hopes of aiding the integration of Blacks back into society. This was, in part due, to the international pressures by the global anti-apartheid movement and the call for economic sanctions against White governed South Africa<sup>20</sup>.

Due to the ANC's call for militant action and for the growing commitment to using violence to address and confront the violence of the apartheid regime, the 1980s, saw the National Party implement what has now infamously been called the 'States of Emergency'. Internally the country was in political chaos, the government was banning anti-apartheid organisations, thousands of people were being detained and tortured and the number of political assassinations was on the rise (Website 5). Apartheid was finally, on the 30 November 1973, declared a crime against humanity by the United Nations and economic sanctions were imposed on South Africa (Website 5).

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<sup>19</sup> Anti apartheid black resistance theatre will be discussed in Chapter 2.3.

<sup>20</sup> These economic sanctions were Resolution 1761 passed in November 1962 and the Sullivan Principles of 1977.



The National Party fought back against the mounting resistance through declaring a State of Emergency in 1985 in a few areas and then between 1986 and 1990 declared a countrywide State of Emergency (Website 5). These States of Emergency were a controlling mechanism that gave the police a greater array of political power allowing them to detain more than twenty thousand people, restricting political funerals, imposing curfews and banning television news cameras from filming in areas of political unrest (Website 6). This banning of news cameras was an attempt to limit international news coverage of the police brutality.

The above, arguably, slightly potted history of the Apartheid era within South Africa offers a few key historical points which help establish an understanding of how the apartheid system (in all its myriad of manifestations) became embodied within black South Africans through the laws and legislations. This potted history also establishes the context of the 1970s and 1980s which I will now use to analyse *Orestes* (1971) and *Woza Albert!* (1983).

### 2.3. Fuelling a Critical Oppositional Theatre

According to Peterson, when the National Party came into power:

The government was acutely concerned with the role that cultural practices could fulfill in negotiating social conflicts and, more importantly, in how the ‘creative arts’ could embody, symbolize, transmit and provide demonstrative rationale to support its national policies. The state felt the need to construct a framework in which the arts could be performed and which set up the religious, social and political boundaries within which to regulate cultural work. (1990, 232)

The National Party realised the danger in the arts, in that if left unstructured and unfiltered then anyone could use this form of speaking out to oppose the government and spread their own political viewpoints. So although the National Party could use the creative arts to symbolise and embody their national policies<sup>21</sup>, like that of social realism in Poland<sup>22</sup>, they soon realised that arts and culture could also be used as a tool against their National Party. They, therefore, in 1963 under the legislation of the Publications and Entertainments Act imposed a censorship that allowed the government to ban any publication that they thought was “undesirable” (Peterson, 1990:232).

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<sup>21</sup> These national policies were the idea of affording white South Africans all the rights and economic access while denying black South Africans any political, social and political rights.

<sup>22</sup> Social Realism was discussed in Chapter 1.1 as a means to only allow theatre that promoted the political and ideological views of Stalin. The connection to South Africa is that the National party wanted to set up a framework through which they could use the creative arts to embody their own national policies like Stalin wanted to use theatre to promote his ideological views of his own version of Poland.

This, however, fuelled a critical oppositional theatre in the 1970s and 1980s that was dedicated to the resistance against the apartheid system and re-constructing the black South African body. This demonstrates another example as to Foucault's notion of the body's ability to resist its dominant discourses (Loots 2010, 108). As argued in the previous section the apartheid system, with its laws and legislations, became embodied within black South Africans and attempted to strip them of all integrity hoping to teach only a sense of inferiority and otherness. Out of this attempt to racially and economically silence, a form of theatre dedicated to challenging this inferiority and promoting a sense of self worth, arose. This form of theatre, amongst the political unrest and mounting anti-apartheid resistance in the 1970s and 1980s, became a part of the resistance struggle.

Anti-apartheid black resistance theatre was one such example of this style of critical oppositional theatre developing that emerged under the BC and focused on the use of black writers and performers to directly address their own socio-political realities (Yvette Hutchinson, 2004:359). For example this theatre style would focus on themes such as oppression and exploitation in South Africa, often depicting police violence, racial discrimination, struggles of migrant workers and issues that were prevalent to black South Africans at the point in time when creating the performance. Peterson offers an explanation of this style saying that, "Forms as diverse as dialogue and mime, song and tableau, sounds and dance, are combined into a striking and aesthetically appealing total performance" (1990:237)<sup>23</sup>.

The focus began to shift from scripted plays to a visual or image based approach that focused on codes as a means of representation<sup>24</sup> favouring a physical style of theatre that was multi-faceted in nature and was created through a collaborative effort via workshopping and improvisation (Marcia Blumberg & Dennis Walder, 1999:49). Both the *Orestes* (1971) and *Woza Albert!* (1983) fall into this style of theatre<sup>25</sup>.

## 2.4. The Physical Body *Within* South Africa

Mark Fleishman's article entitled *Physical Images in the South African Theatre* (1996:173) provides a comprehensive look into why and how physical images have been utilised

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<sup>23</sup> I acknowledge that other forms of resistant theatre did exist as well as non-resistant and mainstream theatre during the apartheid era, however for the purpose of this dissertation I have focussed on black resistance theatre.

<sup>24</sup> This notion of codes will be examined further in Chapter 2.4.

<sup>25</sup> The *Orestes Project* (1971) and *Woza Albert!* (1983) will be analysed in Chapter 2.5.

historically within South African theatre. He suggests, “That for most people making theatre in South Africa the written word on its own is woefully inadequate to portray or explain the full complexity of the reality they face” (1996:174). The physical body, in the case of South African theatre in apartheid, becomes a stronger tool to portray the reality that black South Africans faced. As I have argued apartheid was an embodied system that focused on a series of laws and legislations that became layered into the bodies of black South Africans and theatre’s job during the apartheid era was to attack this embodied system.

American cultural theorist Richard Schechner says:

The theatre produced within a particular society mirrors the social drama of that society. In other words, the characteristic dynamics of everyday life in a particular culture influence the kinds of images one finds in the theatre of that culture. (As quoted in Fleishman, 1996:176)

South Africa of the 1970s and 1980s was at a time of struggle and resistance situating the black South African body as site of struggle against the dominant discourses being imposed on it by the National Party. The black body became a site of struggle due to it being put into situations whereby it would become empowered and thus go against the dominant discourses of the National Party that sought to disempower the black South African body. For example, the anti-apartheid resistance sought for the empowerment of black South Africans through using, amongst other weapons and actions, the moving speaking defiant black body on stage. In a performative setting the black South African body goes on stage layered with the discourses imposed on it through the laws of the apartheid system, but the body has the ability to resist these dominant discourses. Theatre became the public space through which these discourses were negotiated through the body, tackling issues that were prevalent within the black South African community such as the struggle of migrant workers, violence and racial discrimination. It also allowed for the empowering of the black body through using it to write and create meaning, breaking the hegemony of the written word. Fleishman argues that the written word, “Presents itself as a pre-ordained truth and as such forms part of a dominant culture which sets terms of high and low, included and excluded, and attempts to limit his freedom of action” (1996:174).

Jay Pather, a South African choreographer, writes:

The body remembers more than through the head. Nerve and vessel, artery and synapse all carry information from point to point, suffusing muscle, bone and cell with a plethora of images and sound, a flicker of light, a scream or a touch. Sometimes we wish that a delete button might annihilate some of the

information. But the body instead stores relentless, file upon file, bottomless cabinet of memory, individual and collective. (As quoted in Loots, 2010:114)

In South Africa, the embodiment of the apartheid system became a collectively felt state of being that affected every black South African. This notion of a ‘collective complex’ was coined by Grotowski who describes it as, “The myths which are not an invention of the mind but are, so to speak, inherited through one’s blood, religion, culture and climate”(1968, 42). Grotowski argues that if the performer attacks these collective complexes then a common ground is set between the audience and performer allowing the audience to go on a process of self analysis<sup>26</sup>.

Fleishman, when discussing the use of the physical body on stage, argues that it works on two levels:

Firstly, they demonstrate the possibility of change in an active way that affects the spectator on a more subliminal level than a simple slogan or verbal statement might. Secondly, and to my mind more importantly, they form part of what Mikhail Bakhtin would call the “grotesque realism” of the South African theatre. By refashioning and re-inventing the material body into extraordinary, often grotesque forms they subvert and parody aspects of the society and the world. The transformed body contains its own logic which can unsettle “given” social positions and interrogate the rules of inclusion, exclusion and domination which structure the social body. (1996:179)

Unlike text, the socially and culturally constructed body has a multitude of codes and conventions that are read differently according to one’s culture and the society they live in<sup>27</sup>, due to the different discourses apparent in each of these. The physical body on stage is then read through these codes and conventions allowing a transformation of the body that has the ability to make a statement through mockery and almost grotesque physicalisation. For example in *Woza Albert!* (1983) the performers mock white men/bosses through over exaggerating their physicality and the use of a red nose, making a boldly political and witty statement that transformed the white male experience during the apartheid era into something rendered laughable like a bumbling clown<sup>28</sup>.

South African theatre during the 1970s and 1980s was both politically charged and different from the mainstream “white” theatre, focusing on a physical style of theatre that constructed a platform through which Grotowski’s performance theories could be used. An analysis of

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<sup>26</sup> Discussed in Chapter 1.2.1.

<sup>27</sup> This idea of codes and conventions was examined in Chapter 2.1.1.

<sup>28</sup> *Woza Albert* (1983) will be examined further when investigating how Grotowski’s performance theories have been utilised within this production.

Athol Fugard's *Orestes* (1971) and Percy Mtwa, Mbongeni Ngema and Barney Simon's *Woza Albert!* (1983) follows as it will provide an examination into how Grotowski's theories have been utilised within apartheid South African theatre<sup>29</sup>.

## 2.5. Grotowski Influences Apartheid Theatre: 1970s-1980s

Grotowski's performance theories and actor training focused on the emergence of the *Innermost Self* through stripping away cultural and social barriers (1968, 35)<sup>30</sup> and South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s needed a style that could do just that; a theatre that was able to re-define the black South African identity and strip away all the discourses imposed on them through the apartheid system.

The following 1970s and 1980s South African theatrical productions each have utilised – in differing degrees and success - Grotowski's performance theories, whether it be in the making of the production, the utilisation of the *Poor* style, or the adoption of Grotowski's philosophies on life and theatre to change the way the performers conducted themselves in the real world and in the process of creating theatre. Both these theatrical productions and processes will be examined and interrogated from a textual<sup>31</sup> and academic<sup>32</sup> perspective.

### 2.5.1. Athol Fugard

Athol Fugard is a white South African playwright and director whose plays formed a major part of the political struggle during Apartheid from the 1960s onwards. Although I have focused on black anti-apartheid resistance theatre up until now, there is also a need to mention that there were white playwrights and theatre makers that were making huge inroads into anti-apartheid theatre, for example Barney Simon, Pieter-Dirk Uys, and the globally acclaimed Athol Fugard.

Fugard chose to present, theatrically, the struggle of individuals as a microcosm for what was happening in apartheid at the time, as Robert, L Berner states, "The stage, in Fugard's vision of it, is the place where the tensions of South African life may be presented symbolically in the conflict of individuals" (1976, 82). He also states that Fugard:

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<sup>29</sup> Both of these productions were created with Grotowski in mind and the performers/directors are open about their use of Grotowski's theories.

<sup>30</sup> This notion of the *Innermost Self* was discussed in Chapter 1.2.

<sup>31</sup> Textual, in this context, is what is provided in the script (Stage directions, dialogue, props and settings) that I can form a link to with Grotowski's performance style and theories.

<sup>32</sup> Academic, in this context, will comprise of interviews and theorists who have researched around these productions.

[p]resents only two or three characters who confront each other in tense and painful moments which reveal their essential humanity against the background of a social milieu which, hopeless and anti-human though it is, cannot totally obliterate their spirit. (1976, 82)

These plays include *Hello and Goodbye* (1965), *Boesman and Lena* (1969) and *People are Living There* (1969), each of which Fugard called “ready-made” plays<sup>33</sup> (Berner, 1976:82).

In an interview with the cast of *Boesman and Lena* (1969) the cast discussed Fugard’s directing style and said that:

Because he writes about real people, he requires that you put yourself into the role of the person and be the person, without any symbols and stuff like that. "Just go ahead and be a person, because it is people i've written about. (Barbera & Fugard, 1993, 433)

Fugard’s directing style reflects a realist notion of theatre that believed that theatre should represent “real life” and the actors should be able to put themselves in the required situation of the play and draw out a truthful response. Realism made use of realistic dialogue, in that it was correct for the time period and context and made use of an acting system that focused on making the performers true to life. For example, within each of Fugard’s plays mentioned above, the two characters are different from one another and their dialogue reflects their class and context.

This realist style is what Fugard based his directing style on in the directing of the “ready-made” plays (Berner, 1976:82), and it provides a comparative point when examining Fugard’s work on the experimental production *Orestes* (1971).

### 2.5.2. Fugard Experiments with *Orestes* (1971)

The *Orestes* (1971) project<sup>34</sup> was first performed in 1971, emerging out of Fugard’s concern with the cycle of violence that was occurring 1960s South Africa. The Sharpeville Massacre occurred in 1960 killing sixty-nine people, the PAC and the ANC then took to building two military wings undertaking two hundred acts of sabotage between 1961 and 1963, as well as the training of people for a violent revolution as a means to strike back against the government. Violence was attempted to be solved with violence and a cycle was beginning to form. Fugard likens this cycle of violence to the Greek myth of Clyemnestra and includes this explanatory note in the programme for *Orestes* (1971):

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<sup>33</sup> This notion of the “ready-made” play is any play that has been scripted completely before the rehearsals begin.

<sup>34</sup> Although the production was called *Orestes* Fugard refers to it as a “project”.

Her husband was Agamemnon. She had two children, Electra and Orestes. Agamemnon sacrificed their third child, Iphigenia, so that the wind would turn and the Greek fleet could leave Aulis for the Trojan War. Agamemnon returned to Clytemnestra ten years later when she murdered him. Orestes and Electra avenged his death by killing their mother. (As quoted in McMurtry, 1998:105)

Fugard juxtaposes this story of Clytemnestra with that of the Johannesburg bomber John Harris, whose bomb injured twenty-three people and killed one on the 24 July 1964<sup>35</sup>.

*Orestes* (1971) saw a step away from Fugard's previous directorial style to one that is partly influenced by Grotowski and partly influenced by his own creative development. After reading Grotowski's *Towards a Poor Theatre* (1968), it reinforced and confirmed what Fugard calls his "pure theatre" aesthetic (McMurtry, 1998:106). This aesthetic being, "A play is an actor before an audience...The moment of truth needs nothing more" (McMurtry, 1998:106), relating to Grotowski's idea of *Poor Theatre*, that a performance only needs the actor/spectator relationship and nothing more (1968, 19). In a description of the production, South African theatre academic and writer, Mervyn McMurtry says:

The spectators entered a large room with seventy chairs enclosing a neutral space containing one chair: "No lights, no costumes, no make-up, and only a few small properties". Fugard had pared down the stage image to the essentials, exemplifying the "poor/pure theatre" manifesto, and thereby challenging the performers to "write" directly into the space. (1998, 109)

The "writing" that McMurtry speaks about here is the ability of the performers to create different settings and transform the few props on stage into anything they want it to be, using nothing more than their own physicality and what Grotowski calls "controlled gesture" (1968, 21). For example, through tapping a matchbox with their finger, the performers are able to transform the matchbox into the sound of the bomb ticking before it explodes (McMurtry, 1998:111).

It also demonstrates the aesthetics of Grotowski's *Poor Theatre* with no lights, costumes or make-up being used, thus allowing the performers to focus on confronting their own sense of their inner being and how it views the world, because as Grotowski states, "Material things prevent our real confrontation with art." (As quoted in Schechner & Wolford, 1997:84).

Fugard discusses his reasoning behind these aesthetic choices as being:

Provoked "to communicate what can't be expressed" through ontologically false dictates of forms which "depend on logical and chronological" exposition, as these were no longer appropriate mediums to

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<sup>35</sup> The juxtaposition between these two stories will be explored further in Chapter 2.5.3.

communicate personal and political experience, on a literal and figurative level. (As quoted in McMurtry, 1998:116)

Fugard adopts the same notion as Fleishman<sup>36</sup> in that the written word on its own is not adequate to portray the reality South Africans face, thus the *Orestes* (1971) project made use of visual images, created through the performer's physicality, alongside very minimal text. An example of these images can be seen in the killing of Agamemnon which is enacted upon a chair. McMurtry quotes Fugard in describing the idea for the image to the actress doing it:

This is unique... It is useful, a "good" thing. It will hold and cradle the full weight of you. And because it is useful it is also beautiful. Get to know it. Explore it until you get to know every crack in its wood, every creak from its joints, every scab of peeling paint. Love it. And as you love it look for its flaw, its imperfection, its one fatal weakness... Have you found the weakness? Good. Now destroy it, using only your hands. (1998, 110)

The image of the chair being ripped apart by the performer's bare hands, with the undertone of love, work together to create a visual image that is visceral, eliciting a response that is not intellectual but rather deeper and more emotional (E.A. Mackay, 1989:31).

### 2.5.3. Conceptualising *Orestes* (1971)

E.A. Mackay, a Classics scholar of the University of Natal and a specialist in the relationship between the verbal and plastic arts in Ancient Greece, states that:

Fugard set out to produce theatre not dependant on written text, and thus free to exploit non-verbal imagery: visual images, images of rhythm, imagistic juxtapositions that do not demand the response of the intellectual (1989, 31)

Fugard likens his adaptation of the original Greek myth to that of a palimpsest<sup>37</sup>; he erased the original myth partially, in the metaphorical sense, and wrote over it with the story of John Harris allowing Fugard to now form juxtapositions and make statements both political and social through these juxtapositions. The John Harris bombing claimed the life of a grandmother, leaving her grandchild alive. Fugard chooses this grandmother to juxtapose with Clytemnestra, the grandchild to juxtapose with Electra, and Harris to juxtapose with Orestes.

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<sup>36</sup> Fleishman's notion is discussed in Chapter 2.4.

<sup>37</sup> This notion of a palimpsest is one used by Fugard, he says, "He superimposed in the sense of a palimpsest, a contemporary incident on a mytho-dramatic source" (McMurtry, 1998:105).



McMurtry states that:

The three performers transformed themselves (two women, a man) into three groups: a woman, young girl and Harris; Clytemnestra, Electra and Orestes; an elderly woman, young girl and Harris: structurally, from archetypes to myth to contemporary experience (1998, 108)

Grotowski believed that the actors became the bridge between the past and the present, between their own roots and the roots of the past. Grotowski believed that it is impossible to create if one destroys the bridge to the past because the past is the source of our creative efforts (Schechner & Wolford, 1997:85). He argues that:

To be sure, our life is individual and personal; we live in the present, but we are the result of something larger – a greater history than our own personal one – an interindividual and interpersonal history. (As quoted in Schechner & Wolford, 1997:85)

The myths link us to the past and allow us to confront our own roots and our own sense of self through asking questions of whether the themes and values of these myths are still relevant and of importance in our own present time. The link to the past becomes a way to examine and bring clarity to the events of the present. *Orestes* (1971) becomes an example of this link to the past, Fugard describes that:

He took the basic emotional conflicts of the ancient stories (brother and sister; mother; husband) and by means of dramatic metaphor, involving all the motif systems we expect of creative literature, but visually presented through actions repeated and developed, he saw and exposed a modern event through the translucent metaphor of the ancient story. (As quoted in Mackay, 1989:32)

Fugard was able to expose and examine the modern event of John Harris in further detail through a theatrical and performed confrontation with the *Orestes* myth. Fugard examines Harris' actions through Orestes, likening Harris' actions against his society to that of what Orestes did to Clytemnestra. McMurtry debates this connection between Harris and Orestes saying, "Orestes is torn between his love for his mother and a hatred of her arising from loyalty to his father. Harris was torn between his love for his mother and a hatred of the mother-country's actions" (1998, 114). Within *Orestes* (1971) Fugard also examines the notion of justice, he states:

Despite the horror of what the government and its policies have done to people and the account for which it must one day answer in terms of suffering, of destroyed and wasted lives... the company of executioners remains loathsome. (As quoted in McMurtry, 1998:112)

The above examples give a sense that through the juxtaposition with the myth of *Orestes* Fugard is able to expand on modern notions, questioning the cycle of violence in South Africa during apartheid, examining the motives behind Harris's bombing through the juxtaposition with Orestes and the concept of justice that was emerging in 1960s South Africa, where people like Harris thought they were doing good by undertaking acts of sabotage and violence resulting in the deaths of innocent bystanders.

More so than this, the visual images created by the performers emerged from deep within their own bodies drawing from their own personal life-experiences (Mackay, 1989:32).

Yvonne Bryceland who played Clytemnestra in Fugard's *Orestes* (1971), says:

Athol had some very clear ideas about what he wanted to do, but he didn't have a script because he did not want to have a script at that stage. He called himself a scribe, and every day he would come and feed an idea, starting off with the Orestes, Clytemnestra, and Electra relationship and running parallel, John Harris and the station bomb. Iphigenia's murder was handled simply. Athol said, 'Imagine there was someone in your life you called to, you said their name every day until suddenly, one day, she didn't answer.' That's a typical kind of suggestion he makes as director. He will find your point of pain and remind you about it. That moment was terrible for me; I can hardly think about it now. We managed to do the play night after night because Athol had been able to touch wells in us that could be repeated in the same pain - without any technical tricks or things like that. Clytemnestra went mad for his child that would never answer her again. Agamemnon never appeared, but Clytemnestra's destruction of him was symbolically enacted, and in that destruction lay her own destruction. (As quoted in Mackay, 1989:32)

Fugard's directing style above reflects a Grotowskian working method through his interest in accessing the *Innermost Self* and the development of the script through a collaborative effort with his performers. Fugard, however, uses what I would call an imaginistic approach<sup>38</sup> to getting the performers to delve into their painful memories, in that he gets his performers to imagine a situation that would end in immense emotional pain, like the use of the example above where someone important in your life stops answering you. Grotowski, on the other hand, uses a method of stripping away until that *Innermost Self* is revealed. This is not to say that either method is right but rather it shows how it is possible to get to the same result using alternative methods. This notion of getting the same result through different methodologies, becomes important as the backbone to understanding my adaptation of the Grotowskian actor training, in that inspired by Fugard, I took the core understanding of Grotowski's actor training and approached it in my own evolving way.

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<sup>38</sup> This term "imaginistic" is one that I would use to describe a process of using the imagination to stimulate emotions.

Fugard's *Orestes* (1971) demonstrates major links with Grotowski's *Poor Theatre* phase, but not, arguably, his *Paratheatre* and *Theatre of Sources* phases; however for the purpose of this research this production was provided as an example as to the adaptability of Grotowski's performance theories not specifically the three phases discussed in Chapter one. Fugard's *Orestes* (1971) makes use of *Poor* staging in the form of a minimalist set and the transformation of props into anything that is needed. For example, the matchbox is used to make the sound of a ticking bomb and newspapers get fashioned into bombs. The physical style of the performance reflects a Grotowskian theatre through: the performer's ability to write directly into the space using their bodies; as well as the use of physical imagery more so than text. Fugard also speaks about working from a Grotowskian base, discussing how Grotowski's *Towards a Poor Theatre* (1968) regenerated his work through the ability of working in a collaborative process with his performers and how it freed him from the confines of the conventional playwriting process. Fugard says that he was now able to, "Challenge the performers with images and ideas and out of their responses, their own inner sources and identities,...[shape] the play" (As quoted in McMurtry, 1998:106).

Within the next section on *Woza Albert!* (1983), similar links will be drawn as to how Mbongeni Ngema and Percy Mtwa incorporated the philosophies proposed by Grotowski, in relation to his ideas around the "holy actor", into creating the production, and how Barney Simon was able to help Ngema and Mtwa realise the use of Grotowski's training.

## 2.6. *Woza Albert!* (1983) Stripped Down

*Woza Albert!* (1983) was written and created by Mbongeni Ngema, Percy Mtwa and Barney Simon. It is a two hander focusing on the mythical questions around what would happen if Morena (God) had to come down to South Africa during the Apartheid era. The two performers play twenty characters each that are distinguishable through the heightened physicality of each character and use of representational costuming. For example, Ngema in scene seven transforms himself into Fidel Castro using a Cuban cap and fat cigar. Two boxes are also utilised within the production, which the performers transform into anything they want. For example, in scene five the box gets transformed into a train (1983, 10). This is done through the performers sitting back to back and rocking as if to the motion of a moving train. (1983, 10). This use of physical gestures to transform the box into a train relates to an example that I provided in Chapter 1.2 about Grotowski's performers being able to transform the floor into a sea and a table into a confessional using nothing more than controlled gesture

(1968, 21). Ngema and Mtwā's use of representational costuming also reflects an understanding of Grotowski's use of costume as a means to have a connection with a certain character. The sound effects within *Woza Albert!* (1983), such as car sirens, a helicopter, machine gun fire and a train were also all done through the performer's voice, again, reflecting a Grotowskian notion of *Poor Theatre*.

The use of this minimalist style could be attributed to the reasoning that black South African theatre during this period had minimal funding and it was logical that the theatre would be minimalist. However, in an unpublished interview with Percy Mtwā he says that they were originally going to use six actors, with sound effects and costumes but once they had read Grotowski's *Towards a Poor Theatre* (1968), their outlook on theatre changed (1984). Outlook here being the realisation that they didn't need all of those sound effects and extra performers for theatre to exist, they could do all the transformation of characters themselves using their physicality and representational costuming and as a result of this, their attitude changed to that of the full commitment that Grotowski talks about, the giving of yourself completely on the stage.

This commitment is not only reflected within Mtwā and Ngema's performance but their actions outside of the production as well. Mtwā speaks about how they both gave up smoking cigarettes because that made them short of breath and affected their memories; they also gave up alcohol because of its effect on their physicality (1984). Working no other jobs they both gave up everything and concentrated solely on the play. This embodies the true sense of the commitment that Grotowski wanted from his performers, the idea of the "holy actor"<sup>39</sup>; leaving everything on the stage with total commitment and total involvement (1968, 35). By this I mean the sweat and exertion – the visceral body - that Mtwā talks about in his interview, where he says, "We get wet with sweat of exertion and we don't mind going through that every night, sometimes even twice Saturdays and twice Sundays" (1984).

Mtwā made it very clear though that, "Jerzy Grotowski's methods are very good but if you're going to take them the way they are and put them on stage, something terrible is going to happen because environments are not the same" (1984). Understanding Grotowski is the first level, but the other is to adapt his techniques and theories to suit your own context and the performers that you are working with, as can be seen in Athol Fugard's *Orestes* (1971) and here in *Woza Albert!* (1983). Mtwā provides an example of this saying that when Grotowski

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<sup>39</sup> Defined in chapter 1.2.1.

talks about techniques to remove psychological barriers they chose to do meditation as they believed that some of Grotowski's techniques were "weird" (Irene Stephanou & Leila Henriques, 2005:198)

The use and adaptation of the Grotowskian style is also in part due to Barney Simon who, in the 1960s, came into contact with Grotowski while living in America (Burns, 2002). Mtwā alludes to this when talking about Barney Simon in Simon's biography *The World in an Orange* (2005), where he speaks about how Ngema and he wanted to utilise the actor training and style of Grotowski in the preparation of *Woza Albert!* (1983), but it was Simon who helped them realise it (2005, 195). It becomes apparent, through, plotting Barney Simon's directorial style, that he is influenced by the teachings of Grotowski.

Lesley Nott, who worked with Barney Simon, said that he taught her that:

It's being prepared to allow a text to access you, and then resonate out. As opposed to imposing your idea on a text and performing it, you allow it to resonate in you and find the places in you, and then give it back (As quoted in Stephanou & Henriques, 2005:135).

Grotowski believed the inner life influenced the voice and the body (1995, 26). It is the psychophysical connection that Grotowski wanted, the uninhibited link between the mind and the body to the point where, like it says in the quote, you can resonate the text within you and give it back. Others who have worked with Simon confirm his connection to Grotowski: John Ledwaba, said, "You had to just look into yourself and find the real core of the information that we were working on." (As quoted in Stephanou & Henriques, 2005:137). This links again to Grotowski's idea that the character develops within that psychophysical connection.

*Woza Albert!* (1983), like *Orestes* (1971), demonstrates an understanding of the Grotowskian style in its use of the *Poor* aesthetics but also within the process, through Ngema and Mtwā interestingly taking on the total commitment and making changes in their own lifestyles for the benefit of the production. The directing style of Barney Simon and his work with Grotowski aided in helping Mtwā and Ngema realise their use of the Grotowskian training style. The key though to understanding their utilisation of the Grotowskian style is that they took elements from Grotowski's training and adapted and incorporated them into their own experience as to what works for them as performers. This can be seen in their own understanding of Grotowski's "holy actor" and how they used their own method of meditation to remove psychological barriers because they found some of Grotowski's

techniques to be ‘weird’ and knew that meditation worked for them (1984). This becomes important to keep in mind as I move on to discuss Grotowski in the 21<sup>st</sup> century South Africa.

## 2.7. *Indumba* (2013): Cleansing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Body

*Indumba*<sup>40</sup> (2013) was choreographed by Fana Tshabalala, a member of The Forgotten Angle Theatre Collaborative based in Johannesburg and Standard Bank Young Artist<sup>41</sup> for Dance 2013. *Indumba* (2013) premiered in Grahamstown at the National Arts Festival<sup>42</sup> in 2013 and then went to the 15<sup>th</sup> Jomba Dance festival<sup>43</sup>. Tshabalala expresses in his programme note for *Indumba* (2013) that the:

Bodies will enter the space which was created to purify the mind, body and the soul. The cleansing process will take place at each moment spent in this place. Every individual cleansing process will be appreciated and acknowledged for what it is in order for bodies to learn from each other without being judged. Bodies will follow the inner voice that is constantly guiding and feeding them on what to do, but most of the time choosing not to listen and ending up with regrets. The body will give the inner voice the space and time to take over, and a chance to connect with the other voices in the space to see if we’ll live with regrets ... In this space there’s no right or wrong but every moment is appreciated for what it is and what it can be (2013).

Tshabalala, like Grotowski, is interested in the *Innermost Self* of the performer, the part of ourselves that is repressed by society and culture and hidden behind our daily masks<sup>44</sup>. As an audience member we get a sense that he wanted to give his performers a space to release their *Innermost Self* and use it as a means to “cleansing” their bodies. Grotowski would describe this “cleansing” as the stripping away of the social and cultural boundaries and the laying bare of one’s own intimacy on stage (1968, 16).

During the post-show discussion Tshabalala discusses how each person has their own individual way of “cleansing” - some people listen to music, others go for a run and some just scream - and he wanted to provide a space where all these individual processes could be put on stage, exploring how each of them become intertwined to create an overall purification of the mind, body and soul (*Indumba*, 2013).

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<sup>40</sup> *Indumba* refers to a traditional hut or designated space where sangomas perform cleansing rituals.

<sup>41</sup> The Standard Bank Young Artist awards is a prestigious set of awards given to South African Artists of a young age who excel in their chosen fields.

<sup>42</sup> The annual National Arts Festival in Grahamstown South Africa is Africa’s largest arts festival.

<sup>43</sup> The Jomba Dance Festival is an annual contemporary dance festival that takes place in KwaZulu-Natal South Africa.

<sup>44</sup> This idea of the *Innermost Self* was examined in Chapter 1.2.1.

Each dancer steps into a taped-off square on the stage and the audience watch as the dancers begin to strip away at their social and cultural boundaries; movements begin to flow into each other, becoming more erratic, the jumps become higher and the sense of fearlessness is evident within the space as the performers begin to move without thinking (*Indumba*, 2013). A sense of *Organicity*<sup>45</sup> can be found in the dancers' movements in that, almost unconsciously, their bodies shift from one movement to the next, finding the flow of movement. Tshabalala emphasises the organic development of the performance, in an interview with Cue newspaper in Grahamstown:

In the studio we started to create our own Indumba through dance. We created our own sacred spaces within which we were totally free to express ourselves, so Indumba to me is about the way dancers within the performance space create their own cleansing rituals and how these rituals relate to each other. (Hancu Louw, 2013)

Tshabalala, within the same interview, also discussed how he would ask his dancers questions: “[I] wanted to go deeper into individuals. When working with dancers I would ask them, ‘What do you do when you are angry?’ Some would say they cry, while others said they scream or write” (Hancu Louw, 2013). These questions allowed for the dancers to develop their own cleansing rituals related to their answers, which would then be added together with the other dancer's rituals by Tshabalala to form one structured choreographed dance piece. It is through this structured choreography that the dancers were able to reach the state of *Organicity* within the dance piece because as Grotowski discusses, in relation to the *Plastiques*, it is through a basic structure and the repetition of that structure that the body is able to begin moving without thinking<sup>46</sup>.

The dancers tap into a part of themselves that holds all the repressed feelings and emotions (the *Innermost Self*) and the square on the stage becomes their sacred space upon which they are able to release all the held emotions. Before the dancer's step into the square, they are a socially constructed body holding on to the mental and physical blocks that bind them but the square becomes their indumba, a place where they are able to reach a ritualised state that strips away at the socially constructed body and allows them to reach an unconscious level where they are able to perform from a place of freedom but at the same time be present in their own bodies. This state of being present and not present in one's own body refers to an idea expressed by Grotowski as “movement which is repose”, described in chapter 1.4 as the

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<sup>45</sup> A working example of *Organicity* is provided in Chapter 1.5.2.

<sup>46</sup> The reasoning as to why the body needs structure to begin moving freely can be found in Chapter 1.3.2.

state that one reaches when the performer releases himself/herself completely and ‘let go’, the moment when your body finds stillness yet you are moving. For me, it is the state when performers are no longer thinking about the past or the future, they are merely present in their bodies at that moment in time. The performers reach the trance-like state on stage where the unconscious and conscious meet, which culminates in a climax that brings relief to not only the performers but the audience as well (Grotowski, 1968:38). Grotowski argues that as an audience member, when the dancers are offering up their most vulnerable sides, it is an invitation for you to go on a process of self-analysis to reach a point where you also let down your barriers (1968, 42).

## 2.8. Conclusion

*Indumba* (2013) demonstrates the basic understandings of Grotowski’s performance theories within its use of getting the dancers to the point where they can release their *Innermost Self* taking the audience on a process of self-analysis and making use of a structured choreography to create *Organicity* within the performer’s bodies. Beyond Grotowski’s performance theories, *Indumba* (2013) also resonates with my own performance work *The Cleansing* (2011/2013), which will be examined within the next chapter.

I feel that to a certain degree *Indumba* (2013), unlike *Orestes* (1971) and *Woza Albert!* (1983), reflects ideas of *Paratheatre*. For example, the dancers have the ability to disarm themselves in the presence of others, as they step into the taped-off square on the stage. This reflects Ronald Grimes definition of *Paratheatre* as being, “The search to disarm oneself in the presence of others and through this find “bodily sincerity” ” (1982, 195). This bodily sincerity, for me, is the freedom of movement that the dancers in *Indumba* (2013) found when they were in the taped-off square on the stage; the high jumps, erratic movements and fearlessness that every dancer moved with.

*Indumba* (2013), *Woza Albert!* (1983) and *Orestes* (1971) form a body of work that demonstrates how Grotowski’s performance theories have been adapted and utilised within South Africa from a practical context. This body of work examines just how adaptable Grotowski’s theories are and how, when used, can change your entire perspective on performing and theatre making.

South Africa comes from a past of oppressive laws that were inscribed directly onto the (primarily black) body, a past that still directly affects us today as South Africans and there is



a need for more styles of theatre - like those of this body of work - that uses the body as a central means of communication. Post-apartheid South Africa is flooded with theatre that Grotowski calls “rich theatre”<sup>47</sup> and myself, like Grotowski, want to step away from this style of theatre towards one that focuses on ‘giving back’ to the performers and the audience. This step away from “rich theatre” is the reason why I situate *The Cleansing* (2011/2013) amongst South African performances that use the body as the central means of communication, and most notably, that stand as examples as to the adaptability of Grotowski’s performance theories.

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<sup>47</sup> Rich Theatre is a term coined by Grotowski that means any style of theatre that seeks to break the barrier between film/television and theatre (1968, 19). For example bringing movie screens on stage (1968, 19).

## CHAPTER THREE

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### **“CLEANSING” THE PERFORMER: AN APPROPRIATION OF GROTOWSKI’S PERFORMANCE THEORIES/ACTOR TRAINING IN *THE CLEANSING* (2011)**

#### 3. Introduction

Grotowski’s performance theories and their myriad of appropriations in, amongst other contexts, the South African context, now form the foundation on which I will examine my own theatre production, *The Cleansing* (Phase One: 2011/ Phase Two: 2013). This examination will take the form of two case studies, discussing first the reasoning and motivation behind the two phases of *The Cleansing* (2011/2013), followed by a discussion and analysis of the development of my own appropriated acting methodology that adapts and makes use of Grotowski’s performance theories/actor training. The final performances will be discussed in relation to their development out of the rehearsal process; the focus here being on the acting and creation process rather than only on the final theatre/performance product.

This chapter begins by offering a framework through which to analyse the creation of my own appropriated acting methodology. This will be done through means of an examination of performance-led research methodologies in relation to qualitative research and how they both inform my process of analysing Grotowski’s performance theories/actor training and the two phases of *The Cleansing* (2011/2013).

#### 3.1. Towards a Practical Working Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative research are the two orthodox research paradigms but according to Brad Haseman, “Researchers in the arts, media and design often struggle to find serviceable working methodologies within the orthodox research paradigms of qualitative and quantitative research” (2006, 1). Both of these research paradigms have opposing notions as to how research should be conducted and approached. Qualitative tends to focus on a set of research strategies that embraces the experiential and interaction between participant and researcher; often conducting research in the form of case studies, interviews and ethnographic work (Michael Harwell, 2011:148). This interaction between researcher and participant forms

a subjective approach to the research in that the findings are taken from the interaction that the participant has with the researcher, so if the researcher is changed the results could change as well. Harwell argues that:

These unique interactions imply that different results could be obtained from the same participant depending on who the researcher is, because results are created by a participant and researcher in a given situation. (2011, 148)

Following on from this he also argues that:

[e]mbedded in this approach is the perspective that researchers cannot set aside their experiences, perceptions and biases, and thus cannot pretend to be objective bystanders to the research. (2011, 149)

The data that is collected through these interviews, research and interactions has to go through a process of analysis called primary analysis:

As interview transcripts are made, or fieldnotes of observation compiled, or documents assembled, the researcher continuously examines the data, perhaps highlighting certain points in the text or writing comments in the margins. These might identify what seem to be important points, and note contradictions and inconsistencies, any common themes that seem to be emerging, references to related literature, comparisons and contrasts with other data and so on. (Peter Woods, 2006)

This form of analysis became very important for me when compiling my data on the performance/acting theories of Grotowski in that I had to be able to form comparisons between those theories and the performances in South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s. I also had to be able to interrogate the theories understanding the core premise that underpins Grotowski's writings so that I could utilise this information in the adaptation of them for the creation of my own appropriated acting methodology around both phases of *The Cleansing* (2011/2013). This being said the qualitative paradigm was best suited to my analysis and interrogation of the data that I collected from the theories of Grotowski, however, the putting into practice of Grotowski's theories within *The Cleansing* (2011/2013) and the development of my own appropriated acting methodology from this, is best understood through the performance-led research paradigm.

Graeme Sullivan, an Australian artist and art theorist, discusses the reasons why the use of practice becomes important in arts research. Sullivan argues that, "Artists themselves have the capacity to explore and explain complex theoretical issues that can have significance across broad areas of knowledge" (2009, 42), as well as saying, "[a] creative impulse reveals an imaginative insight that challenges what we know" (2009, 43). He attempts to form an

argument in favour of artists by saying that artists also have the ability to explore complex theoretical issues; it's just that their methods of exploring these issues are done through creative means. What began to develop was a debate around the use of creativity for the purpose of research, framing two mind-sets, one in which the use of studio practice as research was undeniable and others who felt it was a travesty and in no way could be used for research (Sullivan, 2009:44). These debates arose due to strict definitions of research that didn't allow for the creative process to be seen as a valid means of research. Sullivan expands on this saying that in Australia, in the 1980s and early 1990s, artists were faced with a wave of rationalist thinking that believed that policies, procedures and programmes had to be clearly defined in order for them to be defended (2009, 43).

The ability then for practice to be considered a form of research within the scholarly community relied on adopting a new definition of research that was flexible enough to include the creative process. This meant the tackling of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which served as the international standard for defining research (Sullivan, 2009:44). The OECD began to rethink their definition after they began to acknowledge how applied research became important in the development of new processes, products and practices, changing their definition of research to, "Creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humankind, culture and society, and the use of this stock knowledge" (Sullivan, 2009:44). By this definition creative work became a means through which to add to the already existing base of knowledge, providing a space for it within the scholarly community.

Once it became an established methodology within academia, practice-led research began to grow in support from the scholarly community and new definitions began to emerge as to the workings of this methodology. For example, the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the UK began to define the workings of the methodologies process:

As with other research conducted by arts and humanities researchers, it involves the identification of research questions and problems, but the research methods, contexts and outputs then involve a significant focus on creative practice. This type of research thus aims, through creativity and practice, to illuminate or bring about new knowledge and understanding, and it results in outputs that may not be text-based, but rather a performance (music, dance, drama), design, film, or exhibition. (Sullivan, 2009:47)

My key research question (“How Grotowski’s performance theories and actor training could be adapted for use in developing my own appropriated acting methodology in post-apartheid South Africa.”) is interrogated through my two linked productions of *The Cleansing* (2011/2013) providing an examination as to how I appropriated and adapted Grotowski’s performance theories/actor training. Contradictory to the definition above these two linked productions are not the only outputs of my research, but are also a significant means to inform my text based research through offering both these productions as case studies for analysis and interrogation.

Mark Fleishman, Head of the Drama Department at the University of Cape Town, provides a definition of practice-led research that is relatable to the workings of my research: “Art practice is paramount as the subject matter, the method, the context and the outcome of artistic research” (2012). By his understanding, art practice is informed by artistic research and vice versa; art practice is the outcome of artistic research but the artistic research is also centred on the artistic practice in that the practice becomes the subject matter of the research. For example *The Cleansing* (2011/2013) was my art practice, it was informed by my artistic research on Grotowski’s theories and practices, but which theories and practices of Grotowski I chose to research was informed by what I required and used in *The Cleansing* (2011/2013).

In relation to my own research, Grotowski’s performance theories/ actor training are examined through qualitative analysis, highlighting the core ideas in his theories and training such as stripping the actor of insecurities and re-connecting the mind and body. These core ideas form the foundation to my artistic research and are used in the development of the process for both phases of *The Cleansing* (2011/2013), however this artistic research was guided by the needs of *The Cleansing* (2011/2013). For example, *The Cleansing* (2011/2013) utilised Grotowski’s *Poor Theatre*, *Paratheatre* and *Theatre of Sources* phases in its development and because of this I focussed my research around those phases.

Practice-led research provides me with the ability to set up a framework through which to examine both phases of *The Cleansing* (2011/2013), by providing a focus methodology whereby it is possible to begin to form connections between my artistic research and the development and analysis of my performance and process, examining how Grotowski’s performance theories/actor training informed the creation of the process and final product of *The Cleansing* (2011/ 2013).

### 3.2. Why Grotowski?

Jerzy Grotowski, out of the need to form a psychological connection with his audience for the development of his own arguably ‘new’ theories and practice of theatre and performance in the 1960s, began to develop physical devices that were used in his productions, for example hitting pipes by the audience’s ears in his performance of *Akropolis* (1964) to replicate for an audience the sound of the gas moving through the pipes in the Jewish death camps of Auschwitz.

This above example was my first encounter as a young theatre student with Grotowski’s theatre ideas and was one that sparked my interest. The sheer visceral nature of what that sound must have been like for the audience is one that sent me on a journey to replicate it within a theatre performance. Like the sound of the pipe cutting through the audience’s every thought, I also wanted to attempt to create a theatre performance that could engage all the audiences’ senses and assist in bringing their attention to the social ills that plague our society. The journey lasted four years where I realised that my training in the realist style of theatre was insufficient for my needs. I was looking to create a production that was able to utilise physical devices focussed on a predominantly psychological approach. As a result of this process I began to focus my attention towards a non-realist approach to theatre and performance that saw me becoming interested in working in non-formal theatre spaces and adopting a Grotowskian working methodology for creating the theatre performance.

Adopting Grotowski’s methodologies to my own process became the hardest part of the journey and it was in part due to my single minded approach. I saw Grotowski’s theories/actor training as being definitive in that it was the only way to go about making a Grotowskian production and you couldn’t change any of his training methods. The key though was to understand that Grotowski’s training was adaptable and able to change according to the needs of any performer; there was no real method to his training, only exercises that the performers could use to negotiate the workings of their bodies. Breaking away from my single minded approach to Grotowski led me to forming links as to how other theatre makers’ ideas and thinking could be used in conjunction with Grotowski’s performance theories/actor training to produce an appropriated acting methodology.

For the purposes of my research, *Orestes* (1971) and *Woza Albert!* (1983) became examples of the adaptability of Grotowski’s theories showing how Fugard, Mtwa, Ngema and Simon

were able to adopt, utilise and adapt Grotowski's performance theories in conjunction with their own thinking and ideas around theatre in the context of apartheid South Africa. Their thinking, praxis and final theatrical work inspired me to re-assess my single minded approach to Grotowski - an approach which began with the desire to replicate his working process and vision - to instead focus on how to adapt and incorporate my own, post-apartheid context, learning and knowledge to Grotowski's performance theories and actor training<sup>48</sup>. This opening up and re-assessment of my approach saw a way that allowed for links to be established between my own working and growing theatre knowledge and Grotowski's performance theories, and as a result of these links my two phase experimental theatre production called *The Cleansing* (2011/2013) was born. *The Cleansing* (2011/2013) forms the central focus within the next sections as I examine the creation of my own appropriated and adapted acting methodology and how this methodology is a reflection and homage to the spirit and essence of Grotowski's performance theories/actor training.

### 3.3. Entering the First Phase of *The Cleansing* (2011)

Grotowski is interested in the social ills of our society, making use of these social ills in his productions (1968, 22). For example, Grotowski uses, in *Akropolis* (1964), the Jewish death camp Auschwitz as a backdrop through which to formulate a question around human nature, which is, "What happens to human nature when it faces total violence?" (1968, 62).

Grotowski said that the reason for using these social ills is that:

They fascinated me, filling me with a sense of interior restlessness, while at the same time I was obeying a temptation to blaspheme: I wanted to attack them, go beyond them, or rather confront them with my own experience which is itself determined by the collective experience of our time. (1968, 22)

The first phase of *The Cleansing* (2011) developed out of Grotowski's ideas expressed above and, for me, the social ill of genocide filled me with a sense of interior restlessness around humanity and the brutality and violence that surround our everyday lives. I read many witness testimonies<sup>49</sup> around the genocides of the Jewish Holocaust (1933), Rwanda (1994) and Bosnia (1995) detailing people's first hand accounts of their survival of these various genocides and it exposed me to a side of humanity that is uncompromisingly violent and brutal. This side of humanity needed to be exposed to people, and so this is where I situate

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<sup>48</sup> My incorporation of my own knowledge into Grotowski's theories will be discussed in the next sections on my production *The Cleansing* (2011/2013).

<sup>49</sup> See Appendix A for examples of these witness testimonies included in my workshopped script for the first phase of *The Cleansing* (2011).

*The Cleansing* (2011) in that I wanted to use these genocides as symbols for representing the brutality of humanity.

*The Cleansing* (2011) takes the audience on a quasi-ritualistic journey. By this I mean that there is no religious significance of the ritual, but rather it is a series of physical images and movements that lead the audience through the different chosen genocides for the purpose of exposing them to the violent and brutal side of humanity. The reason I choose these three genocides can be attributed to the fact that they span across history, demonstrating that this cycle of violence is ongoing. It also spans across different continents, from first world to third world, demonstrating that this issue is not just isolated but is felt all around the world. Through this exposure I had hoped to spark thought in the audience's psyche around the violence and brutality of our humanity so that perhaps we may begin to heal or cleanse the violence and brutality that seemingly surrounds our human condition.

The audience steps into a grass patch outdoors, deconstructing the actor audience relationship and pushing the audience outside of their comfort zone of a dark theatre where they could hide and watch the performance passively. There is a fire burning in the middle of the performance space filling the audiences' noses with the smell of burning wood, which when coupled with the sounds of crickets and the rustling of the leaves in the wind, aid in pushing the audience further outside of their comfort zones. A drummer beats his drum by the fire; his eyes closed paying no attention to the audience. I had hoped to activate the audiences' senses; their sense of smell through the burning fire wood, their hearing through the sounds of the drum and environmental sounds, and their visual senses through the use of minimal lighting and the visual composition of the drummer playing as the fire illuminates his face. Each of these stimulants worked together to form the illusion of a traditional ritual. For forty five minutes the audience should feel as though they are taken on a journey that stirs deep within their unconscious and makes them feel uncomfortable.

This journey begins with The Jewish Holocaust<sup>50</sup>, the performers trudged in singing a Nazi anthem that was slowed down and sung in monotone, to resonate with the slow heavy physicality of their trudging. The performers then bundled together and moved forward onto the grass patch, keeping contact with each other the whole time. I wanted to create the claustrophobic feel of the cattle carts that the Jewish people arrived on to the death camps and

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<sup>50</sup> The Jewish Holocaust took place between the years 1933-1945 and involved the mass extermination of the Jewish people by the Nazi power, led by Adolf Hitler.



accentuate this feeling through having the performers breathe heavily and gasp for air. Once in the performance space the performers would collapse on the floor then slowly get up and do a choreographed sequence, in which they “attacked” each other, becoming more intense as the drum beat behind it built. The performers then had to walk forward towards the fire and take off their costumes while presenting a testimony from survivors of the Jewish Holocaust that spoke about their arrival in the concentration camps (Appendix A). This act of removing their clothes resonates with the survivors’ testimonies that speak about how they had to strip off their clothes and be searched by the Nazi soldiers (Appendix A). The final part of this section then had the performers each paint blue stripes onto their bodies as a symbol of the striped pyjamas that the Jewish people had to wear in the concentration camps.

I focussed on an idea of layering within each section of *The Cleansing* (2011), in that I began with the genocides and then layered movement with real testimonies from survivors of the various genocides and symbols that represented each genocide. These layers, when added together, formed a text<sup>51</sup> through which I was then able to construct a view of the genocide for my audience. For example, in the Jewish Holocaust section I layered grotesque movements of violence with real testimonies, detailing some of the horrors witnessed by survivors, to form a representational picture of the Jewish Holocaust for my audience. Having my performers then apply the blue stripes directly onto their bodies with paint became a way to symbolically etch the genocide onto their body, becoming a symbolic representation of all the horrors that occurred during the Jewish Holocaust.

The Rwandan genocide<sup>52</sup> section came after the Jewish Holocaust section and I wanted my performers in this section to take on the role of the Hutu, who killed the Tutsi<sup>53</sup>. The reason I wanted my performers to take on the role of the Hutu is that I wanted to demonstrate how frenzied and brutal their attacks on the Tutsi were. I had the performers sit on a concrete block and sharpen their machetes<sup>54</sup> with an oil stone. Each person individually would start to speak an item of text that focussed on putting them in the role of the Hutu (Appendix A), then stand up and apply a mixture of green, yellow and red paint onto their faces as a symbol of the old Rwandan flag. The old Rwandan flag stood as a representation of peace, but after all

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<sup>51</sup> This notion of text refers to the means through which to construct meaning.

<sup>52</sup> The Rwandan genocide occurred from April 1994-July 1994 and involved the genocidal mass killing of the Tutsi by the Hutu majority.

<sup>53</sup> I acknowledge that there was Tutsi on Hutu violence but I have chosen to focus on the Hutu violence against the Tutsi as this was where the majority of the violence took place.

<sup>54</sup> Machetes for me were one of the symbols of the Rwandan genocide, as a lot of the killing was done with machetes.

the horrors of the genocide the colours became tainted, and had to be changed. My performers applied these colours to their faces as a symbol of the horrors that were faced in old Rwanda. After the symbolic application of the paint the performer would sing the song that the Hutu used to use when hunting the Tutsi while hacking the floor with their machete (Appendix A). The individual performer would stop singing the song when the next person started to speak and then start singing again when that person begins singing again. This caused the song to get bigger and more intense with the inclusion of each new performer until it built to a climax and the performers stabbed their machete into the floor as a representation that the killing is done. With the machetes in the ground the Bosnian genocide<sup>55</sup> section began.

All the performers advanced onto one person and began to move around them, rubbing their bodies against them and applying red paint down the one person's legs. While these actions are happening to the person, they would present a testimony from a survivor of the Bosnian genocide, detailing the rape of Muslim teenage girls at the hands of the Serbs (Appendix A). The rubbing of the performer's bodies against the one person and spreading red paint onto their legs while they are presenting the testimony, worked as a way to heighten the bloody sexual act of the rape<sup>56</sup>. When the testimony was over, the person would fall to the floor and the rest of the performers would move onto the next person and the same actions would occur, until nobody was left.

The final section was not linked to any historical genocide but rather ended the journey that I took my audience on. It focussed on the idea of cleansing or providing relief from the horrors that were represented in the previous sections. All the performers collected their machetes out of the ground and sat around the fire putting their machetes in the fire to heat them up. My drummer then put the drum down and picked up a bowl of water that he took to each performer, where they had to run water down the blade as a representational means of cleansing the blade of its associations with the Rwandan genocide. The performers also had to splash water over their bodies, washing off the paint as a symbolic gesture of cleansing the horrors of the genocides from their bodies. *Mphephu*<sup>57</sup> was then burnt in the fire as the

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<sup>55</sup> The Bosnian genocide occurred between the years of 1992 and 1995 and involved the removal and massacre of the Bosnian Muslims by Serbia as a means to "ethnically cleanse" Bosnian territory.

<sup>56</sup> This will be discussed further in the next section as I analyse *The Cleansing* (2011) and each of the sections in greater detail.

<sup>57</sup> This is wild thyme that is burnt during Zulu and Xhosa rituals to talk to the ancestors and is used in cleansing ceremonies to ward off negative energy.

performers each sat down and breathed in the smoke of the *mphephu*, as a means to rid themselves of negative energy, chanting, “With fire we cleanse our weapons, with water we heal our wounds, in the earth we bury our dead and we breathe the smoke to forget.” (Appendix A) This was a chant that the performers devised themselves calling towards the elements of fire, water and earth to begin healing the horrors left over after these genocides; the bloodied weapons, the wounded people and the ones who died during these genocides. This final section left the audience with the chant for healing the horrors left over after the genocides in hopes that it would make the audience think about the violence and brutality that plague humanity.

The above narrative account has been provided for the first phase of *The Cleansing* (2011). I can now focus on why I chose to include and offer certain theatrical processes, providing specific examples and pictures from the first phase of *The Cleansing* (2011).

### 3.3.1. “With Fire we *Cleanse* our Weapons”<sup>58</sup>

The first phase of *The Cleansing* (2011) was performed in 2011 for my Honours directing project using five performers. It became an experiment into the utilisation of, almost pure, Grotowskian methodologies and how these could be used in the development of performers towards creating a physical performance. By physical performance I mean the use of the body and voice to create resonant theatrical images that were able to convey specific meanings. Specifically, these images had to convey the brutal and violent side of humanity expressed within witness testimonies from the Jewish Holocaust and Rwandan and Bosnian genocides. An excerpt from my director’s note reads as follows:

After the Holocaust a famous slogan was developed as a resistance against what happened in Nazi Germany: “Never Again”. It was supposed to be a reminder to the future of humanity that we cannot allow such atrocities ever to happen again. Yet genocides continued to occur; Rwanda, Bosnia and Cambodia all played home to the mass killing of more than 7000000 people. It begs the question, will humanity ever learn? (2011)

Learning about these global genocides, as I have said in the previous section, created a feeling of an interior restlessness; an intensely personal, social and political awareness for me around the atrocities that are ongoing within humanity. The body has become, and is, the battleground within these genocides. For example, in the Bosnian genocide Muslim teenage girls were raped by the Serbs as an act of defilement where Muslim women’s ability to bear

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<sup>58</sup> This is a quote from our workshopped text for the final moment in the first phase of *The Cleansing* (2011).

Muslim children was denigrated and ruined, causing some of the girls who were raped to fall pregnant with the Serbs baby. This pregnancy aided in the Serbs plan of making the Bosnians 'unclean' through producing babies that were part Serb. In the Jewish Holocaust, too, the Jewish body was starved and beaten both physically and emotionally<sup>59</sup>.

As discussed in the previous section my performers' bodies became the centre of the struggle for meaning through the layering of the grotesque movements and images with the testimonies and symbols to produce a working text as to how the body could be read. An example of this can be seen in the image below.



This picture is taken from the Bosnian section of *The Cleansing* (2011) in which the witness testimony of a young Muslim girl is being spoken by my performer; she speaks about how she was raped at the age of twelve by the Serbs (Appendix A). This testimony is one of many that are found online from various sites that store the testimonies of survivors of the genocides. Directorially I chose to layer this spoken testimony with the image of blood being rubbed down the performer's legs, as she is speaking the testimony. The blood represents

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<sup>59</sup> This starvation and beating of the Jewish people is spoken about in the Jewish Holocaust witness testimonies provided in Appendix A.

<sup>60</sup> All pictures featured in this research have been taken by Heather Fitchet of *Heather Fitchet Photography*.

many concurrent things; the violent taking of the Muslim girl's virginity, the brutality of rape as a forced sexual act and the use of rape in war to main women ('the enemy'). This juxtaposition and witness testimony forms a layered text of words, images and the actual actor's body on stage, that work together to construct a grotesque theatrical image of gendered war violence against a young girl.

The image of the blood on my performer's legs was created with red paint and dirt so as to create a dirty looking blood that added to the grotesque theatrical image. In the previous section I spoke about the use of paint in each of the different sections and how it became the symbol of each of the genocides such as the striped 'pyjamas' in the Jewish Holocaust, and the colours of the old Rwandan flag. For the performers it should not feel like they are just applying paint to their bodies, but that they are symbolically representing a violation of their bodies with the symbols of these genocides. The pictures below offer an image of what the paint looked like being applied to the performers' bodies, showing the transformation of the performers as they apply each layer of paint onto their bodies. This transformation is one in which the body becomes a site of struggle, where the three genocides were enacted on through a process of symbolic representation. By this I mean that I didn't want my performers to realistically feel that they had survived the genocides but rather their bodies had to stand as a representation of the violence and brutality that occurred within these genocides.





In the previous section I spoke about *The Cleansing* (2011) as a quasi-ritualistic journey that used elements such as an outdoor setting, fire and drumming to create the illusion of a traditional ritual. Expanding on this I wanted to create a performance that was a full bodied experience for both my performers and audience in that it didn't only activate their minds or their bodies but both of these and all their senses. To fully experience the performance you could not watch with only your eyes and ears, but you had to smell the fire burning and listen to the environment around you, becoming fully immersed in the performance. Using Grotowski's understanding, the only way to become fully immersed in the performance is to drop the personal barriers that each of us have, the culturally conditioned wall, as these prevent us from experiencing the world directly (1968, 42). For me, traditional ritual has always been associated with an altered state of consciousness, in that there is an element of trance where the initiates go beyond their own consciousness and move as if they had no control over their bodies. For me this trance-like state is the moment when the performer has relinquished control of his/her body and has dropped all personal barriers; when the performer is most open to viewing the world around him/her. It is for this reasoning that I chose to use the illusion of a traditional ritual in that I wanted to strip my audience down of their personal barriers and open them up to viewing the violence and brutality in our world. The elements that I chose in the construction of this illusion were chosen due to their ability

to promote an altered state of consciousness. Drumming has long been associated with guiding people into altered states of consciousness, Layne Redmond an American drummer and expert of drums states that:

Drumming is an ancient technique that has been used to shift states of consciousness. In various ancient cultures chanting, rhythmic breathing and drumming constellated an ancient technique used to synchronize the body with the mind in order to explore varying levels of consciousness. The physical activity of creating repetitive sounds entrained right & left-brain activity to alter brainwaves to a relaxed theta state of consciousness. In this relaxed state creativity, intuitive insight, healing & spiritual awareness contribute towards a condition of healing of physical, psychological and emotional wounds. (1997)

The ability of the drum to explore various levels of consciousness is one that plays an important role in *The Cleansing* (2011) in that I wanted my performers to use the rhythm of the drum to shift the intensities that they moved with<sup>61</sup>. For example, the hacking of the ground by my performers in the Rwandan section was built into a frenzy using the fast rhythm of the drum underneath it. The rhythm of the drum also drew the audience in, aiding them into stepping into the altered state of consciousness through the constant repetition of the same beat that according to Redmond would cause a relaxed state of consciousness.

The outdoor setting, which I have already spoken about, was a means to take the audience out of their comfort zones and deconstruct the actor/audience relationship. Theatre venues reinforce a separation between actor and audience that stops the audience from becoming fully immersed in the performance; they are in darkness when the performers are in light, they are comfortably sitting on a chair, and they passively watch the performance. This wouldn't work in *The Cleansing* (2011) as I needed my audience to be fully immersed, so the audience was in an outdoor setting where they had to sit on the floor and were positioned close to the performers so as to feel a part of the performance. It is through this that I had hoped to aid the audience in fully immersing themselves in the performance. The fire was burning within this outdoor setting and for me watching a fire for a long period of time has a mesmerising affect on a person that aids in altering one's state of consciousness.

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<sup>61</sup> This altered state of consciousness in traditional ritual through drumming can also be seen in our contemporary society through an example of music. When I go to and listen to metal at a nightclub the intensity of the music causes people to shift into an altered state of consciousness as they run around the dance floor pushing people. This notion of music will be explored further when examining its use within my adaptation of Grotowski's methodologies.

The first phase of *The Cleansing* (2011) as much as it was the final product of the fire and outdoor setting and physical performance, was predominantly process driven and for me the process was the most important part of this performance. While the final theatre product was important, as the director and facilitator, I was more interested in the process of creating the work and being able to take my performers on a journey that appropriated and adapted Grotowski's performance theories/ actor training for the purpose of stripping away their inhibitions and fears caused through social and cultural boundaries. The aim of this journey was for the performers to gain useful experience from the process that they could use in developing themselves as performers. It was therefore my intention to use young actors who I felt were not necessarily the best physical actors but would stand to gain the most from the process and would be willing to learn from me and commit to the performance. Grotowski talks about the total commitment of the performer, the giving of yourself over completely (1968, 35), and I cast actors who I felt would give of themselves completely to the production.

### 3.4. The Grotowskian Journey

This section will not be meant as a complete record of the process that I used, but rather an analysis of some of the process, providing a comparative point when discussing the second phase of *The Cleansing* (2013) in the next chapter.

In Chapter One, I discussed the intentions of Grotowski's actor training as a means to aid the performers in delving into their unconscious and coming into contact with their *Innermost Self* (1968, 35). Grotowski speaks about the *Innermost Self* as the place that holds our most painful memories and from where our insecurities develop (1968, 35). These insecurities are our own personal barriers that Grotowski says form mental blocks that need to be stripped away (1968, 16). Within *The Cleansing* (2011) I wanted to aid my performers in delving into their *Innermost Self* and releasing their repressed emotions and insecurities<sup>62</sup>. The reason for this being that the performers' personal barriers cause them to become inhibited on stage in the form of tension and I wanted to develop my performers to the point where they wouldn't be inhibited by this tension. Grotowski would usually have months to work with his performers on vocals and stripping the body towards its *Innermost Self*, sometimes even a year but I had six weeks. My process appropriated Grotowski's performance theories/actor

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<sup>62</sup> How I stripped my performer of these personal barriers and aided them in delving into their *Innermost Self* will be examined when I analyse the process of *The Cleansing* (2013).



training and adapted it to suit a six week process. It involved three weeks of aiding the performers in pushing through their personal barriers, towards a state of mind where they would be able to delve in to their subconscious and use their repressed emotions and uninhibited body to fuel the grotesque images required on stage. The next three weeks was then the creation of the movement and images using what was learnt in the first weeks and linked with Grotowski's idea of developing performances through improvisation<sup>63</sup>.

### 3.4.1. Transformation Through Music

Music was one of the key things that I used in aiding the performers in releasing their inhibitions and getting over their self-consciousness. The performers' inhibitions and self-consciousness form the personal barriers that Grotowski talks about and through music I had hoped to begin the stripping process of breaking down these personal barriers. The performers were played a piece of music and then told to move in any way they wanted around the space. The reason I used music is that it has the ability to transform the performers' emotional state, through sad music, and also allowed them to express the music through physical movement. It became the beginnings of teaching them how to express a feeling through movement and providing me with a benchmark as to what degrees of self-consciousness inhibited the performers from releasing themselves to the music and just moving. This self-consciousness becomes a mental block that according to Grotowski inhibits the mind/body from working together<sup>64</sup> (1968, 16).

The first step of this exercise was to play different music of all different styles and genres one after another and watch to see how each song affected the performers' body differently, causing a change in the movement according to the intensity and pace of the song. The performers began the exercise self-consciously, seen in their hesitation of movements instead of a free flow of movement, and tense bodies because they were worried about what the other performers would think of them. As the exercise progressed though, the performers began to loosen up, some still a bit hesitant, but generally the movements began to develop flow and they were less focussed on what they were doing. This step of the exercise is one that I used often over the three weeks to gauge where the performers were at in terms of getting over their self-consciousness.

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<sup>63</sup> Grotowski's utilisation of improvisation to create performances can best be seen through Thomas Richard's book *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions* (1995).

<sup>64</sup> The mental blocks within performers were discussed in Chapter 1.2.

The second step of this exercise was premised on the idea that Grotowski believed that emotions should emerge through physicality. The performers each had a dance mat to themselves and they had to move to the music within the space of the mat. Breathing became important in this exercise in that the performers had to breathe through their movements discovering how the breath affected them. I noticed that the breath had the ability to calm the performers' bodies through deep slow breathing and it had the ability to make their bodies frantic through short quick breaths, and when they linked the breathing to the movement and the music emotions began to emerge. The performers began to explore the range of emotions within the song through their bodies and breathe, finding how the slow breathing made their movements ethereal and fluid and the quick heavy breathing made movements that were quick and frantic<sup>65</sup>.

This exercise is not one that Grotowski used in his process but was one that I developed using the core aim of his training, the stripping away of the personal barriers of performers. I appropriated Grotowski's aim and transformed it into an exercise, discovering how I could use my own knowledge and thinking around music to achieve this aim of Grotowski's actor training. Throughout the process of *The Cleansing* (2011) I attempted to construct my own exercises to achieve the aims of Grotowski, in some cases adapting his own exercises for the same purpose. An example of this can be seen in the adaptation of his "Tiger" exercise (Grotowski, 1968:145-148).

### 3.4.2. Discovering the "Animal Within"

Chapter 1.3.3 discussed Grotowski's exercises around voice and breathing stating that, "Bodily activity comes first, and then vocal expression" (1968, 151) and providing an example of one of his animal themed exercises called "Tiger" (Grotowski, 1968:145-148).

This first exercise I did with the actors was based on Grotowski's notion above that the vocal expression emerges from the body. I called this first exercise "Rolling and Release" and it involved the incorporation of sound into the movement of the body. It began with the rolling down of the spine but releasing each section separately (chest, chest stomach, chest stomach hips, etc.) while making any sound and maintaining it for the whole exercise. What happens is that the sound begins to change as the body moves, going up in volume and pitch as the body rises and going down in volume and pitch as the body lowers into the roll. The

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<sup>65</sup> The use of the breath in this way is what was described in Chapter 1.5.2 as breathing physically with the movements, allowing the impulse of the breath to unconsciously manipulate the movements and body.

performers then moved to the floor rocking from side to side and rolling around on the floor, while still maintaining the sound. The idea of this exercise being that the longer you move for, the less you think about how you are moving, and thus the performers begin to push through their self-consciousness allowing the voice to emerge from the body without resistance.

“Rolling and Release” works in much the same way as Grotowski’s “Tiger” exercise, described in Chapter 1.3.3, in that they both worked towards a release of the voice through physical movement. Grotowski’s “Tiger” exercise wanted the performers to emerge themselves in the physicality of the tiger completely (1968, 145). This was aided through Grotowski’s taunting, attacking the performers with the lines, “I am the tiger, not you, and I am going to eat you” (1968, 145), to which the performers had to roar back at him.

My adaptation of the “Tiger” exercise was also based on Grotowski’s idea of releasing the performers of timidity but not for the purpose of releasing the voice. I wanted to release the performers’ timidity to aid them in engaging with their aggressive sides. The reason for releasing my performers of timidity is that the image and movements that I wanted to create around the genocides were violent and there was no room for timid performers, they had to be fully immersed in the representational act of violence and brutality so as to get a clear image across to the audience. Each actor was put on a separate mat and they had to pace from end to end on all fours while taking on the physicality of a tiger and having them just breathe in and breathe out. The confinement of the mat makes the actors feel as though they are a caged tiger and as I tell them to increase the intensity and speed of the breath they become more agitated. This agitation is then fuelled through the use of a drum played loudly right by them. This caused some of the performers to reach a state where they were pulling at the mat in frustration and as this frustration reached its peak, the performers were told to move off the mat and move in any way they felt. Like tigers being released from their cages, the performers ran around the space releasing the pent up frustration and then slowing down to a slow walk exploring how their bodies moved in the space. Running around the space was a sign as to how immersed the performers were within the physicality of the tiger; allowing the physicality of the tiger, the breathing variations and the sound of the drum to connect them with the part of themselves that holds all their anger. As well as allowing the performers to connect to this anger, this exercise also allowed for the release of this anger through the running around, which prevented it from becoming an inhibiting block that would be counterproductive to the release of the voice.

The music exercise, rolling and release, and the tiger all formed a major part of the physical exercises of the first three weeks of the process, focussing on the connection between voice and body and stripping away at the performers' self consciousness through a series of exercises that focussed on the physical body. The next exercise, which I called "The Mountain" was a part of the psychological exercises focussing on the performers' psyche and providing a space through which they could learn to control their insecurities.

### 3.4.3. Journey Up the Mountain

In Chapter 3.3 I spoke about these insecurities as the mental blocks that inhibit performers and cause tension in their bodies. To control these insecurities I proposed the use of a relaxation method that had the performers lying on separate mats and just breathing in and out very slowly to the sound of my voice. The slow breathing acted as a relaxant, calming the performers' bodies and minds and once I was sure that they were relaxed, through an observation of their bodies for tension, the journey began. The performers' journey was guided by me describing everything they saw, so as to allow their imaginations to be activated and take them into the visualisation completely. Their journey took them to the top of a mountain on a clear day with no clouds in the sky and a beautiful view over the valley. I asked the performers to sit on the edge of the mountain and contemplate the view out over the valley. The image began to shift then, the weather changed and the clear hot day became colder as the clouds started to come in. The performers had to imagine that there were footsteps behind them getting closer but the footsteps belonged to their insecurities and they had to visualise this insecurity in every way: how it looked, what it was wearing and the sound of its footsteps. A physical manifestation of the performers' insecurity should begin to take image in their minds, from the toes up to its head. As the image took form, it was as if the performers reached into their innermost selves and touched on those painful memories stored there. Their bodies began to become tense, their breathing became erratic and fear started to overwhelm them and it was at this point that they had to each stand up individually and speak to it, trying to get it to go away.

Meeting with their insecurity at the edge of the mountain was my way of allowing the performers a safe space to deal with their insecurities. Each performer screamed and shouted and cried while they were on the mountain but when they were brought out of the visualisation each had a sense of catharsis and relief that they were able to deal with these issues instead of pushing them down further. While they were able to deal with the insecurity,

the performers all agreed that it is not something you will lose forever but something that will remain with you and it is how you handle it that becomes important; you can let it rule your life or you can learn to control it to the point that it won't inhibit your ability to perform or do things in your everyday life.

The journey up the mountain ended the three week process of aiding the performers in the development of their minds and bodies for the performance. The next step was for the performers to use what they had learnt within these first three weeks and apply it to the construction of the final performance.

#### 3.4.4. Constructing Through Images

Grotowski believed in the use of improvisation in the creation of his performances (1995, 19). Thomas Richards speaks about his work with Grotowski, stating in relation to improvisation that:

We should not improvise without a structure, but pre-construct the basic outline. This would give us points of reference, like telegraph poles, which he called "repairs; without this structure we would be lost. (1995, 11)

My images and movement used in *The Cleansing* (2011) were created keeping this idea of a basic structure in mind; each genocide was worked on individually, having the performers create images based on associations and information about each one.

The Jewish Holocaust is associated with the idea of violence against the Jewish people from both a psychological and physical perspective and witness testimonies spoke about how when the Jewish people arrived at the concentration camps they were beaten by the Nazi guards (Appendix A). I wanted to begin then by getting the performers to create still standing images around this idea of violence and the example of being beaten by the Nazi guards. I asked them to explore what are the associations with being beaten, not the face value of the physical act but what was at the core of it; things like violence, abuse and power. Once the still standing images were edited an addition of a sequence of movements between each image was added to. To this movement I then added the beat of a drum ranging from fast to slow and played at different intensities. Like the tiger exercise, the drum was meant as a way for them to change the intensity of the movement based on the beat of the drum and fully emerge themselves into the violent nature of the act. The final step was then to repeat this movement and change the rhythm each time playing with the idea of how the intensity of the

performers' movements shifts with each change of rhythm. Like the *Plastiques*<sup>66</sup>, the idea was to construct one sequence of events that would then be repeated, for the purpose of seeing how the sequence transforms with every repetition. In the two photos below, the repetition of the sequence of movements and images turned it into a choreographed act of violence that the performers became more immersed in with every repetition due to the rising intensity of the drum leading them into a state of mind reminiscent of the caged tiger.



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<sup>66</sup> Described in Chapter 1.3.2.

The Rwandan (1994) and Bosnian (1995)<sup>67</sup> sections, like the Jewish Holocaust section, also used the method of creating a basic outline for the movements out of associations and information about the genocides. The only difference being that I did not start developing the movement from still standing images. Still standing images provided a good starting point for developing the movement as it formed separate clear images that could then be linked together to form a movement. I felt, though, that after my performers used the still standing images in the Jewish Holocaust section I wanted to experiment and see if they were able to develop movement without the use of these images, rather developing it from the information and symbols of the genocides.

For the Rwandan section, I wanted to associate the movements with the use of machetes in the killing of the Tutsi by the Hutu. Each performer had a machete that they would sharpen with an oil stone while they were sitting on the ground. The sound generated from the oil stone scraping against the steel of the machete was meant to have the same effect as nails on a chalkboard in that it would be unpleasant to the audiences' ears and aid in making them feel uncomfortable. The performers then had to hack the ground with the machetes while singing a song that the Hutu used when hunting for the Tutsi, adding a visceral nature to the song and making it unpleasant for the audience to watch. This hacking of the floor does not work unless the performers can tap into the violent sides of themselves and show a brutality that makes the audience almost envisage that it was a human being that the performers were hacking. The performers had already trained towards being able to release their anger in the previous three weeks but I wanted to aid them further, allowing the brutality of the act to come across to the audience clearly. I did this through means of giving each performer a machete and just telling them to hack at the plants and around them. The performers had to form an image in their minds of everything that made them angry and then transfer this anger to the act of hacking the plants and ground. This technique stems from my observation that when some people get angry they transfer this anger to a physical act such as punching a cushion or squeezing a stress ball. In this case it was the hacking of the floor with a machete. The ability of the image to aid in the physical act stems from the image activating the psyche of the performer generating a physical impulse within their bodies that they should act on

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<sup>67</sup> Bosnia was used as an example in the previous section and will therefore not be discussed in this section.

without hesitation<sup>68</sup>. The sequence of pictures below demonstrates the grotesque and violent images that were created in the Rwandan genocide section, using the method of improvisation.



<sup>68</sup> Discussed in Chapter 1.3 in relation to how Grotowski uses image associations in his actor training.



The incorporation of the witness testimonies into the movements and images of Bosnia, Rwanda and the Jewish Holocaust was one that I allowed to happen organically<sup>69</sup> in that the performers and I fitted the testimonies into the movements where we thought it best and then allowed the text to emerge from the physicality. I did not work with the performers on how to say anything but rather let the physicality of each section of *The Cleansing* (2011) guide the presenting of the text. For example, in the Bosnian section the rubbing of the blood onto the performer who was presenting the testimony was meant to aid the performer in the feeling of being violated. The performer had to allow this feeling of being violated to permeate their body, and because the voice emerges out of the body, this feeling would also affect the way the testimony is presented.

Adding the text to the physical movements marked the end of the six week process of developing the performers for *The Cleansing* (2011). In the short space of time I wanted to focus on the core ideas around Grotowski's performance theories and actor training, such as stripping the mental blocks of performers, insecurities and self consciousness, and creating a safe space through which the performers could explore the painful memories repressed in their *Innermost Self*. *The Cleansing* (2011) reflects the beginnings of the development of my own acting methodology that uses the core ideas expressed by Grotowski interwoven with methods and knowledge that I had acquired over the years to produce a working method of acting. In 2013 I then expanded on the beginnings of this acting methodology, creating a second phase of *The Cleansing* (2011), which evolved many of the methods of the first phase as well as developing new ones.

### 3.5. Conclusion

This first phase of *The Cleansing* (2011) focussed on creating a Grotowskian inspired performance that focussed on the social ill of genocide. I wanted to create a performance that followed very closely to something that Grotowski would do in the hopes that I would be able to generate thought in my audience and I feel in this respect that I achieved what I wanted to do. The final performance left the audience very quiet as they left the performance venue, which for me was a sign that I had provoked thought in them and they were processing what they had seen. A few audience members remarked on the fact that they knew of the genocides but didn't know the extent of the violence and horrors that occurred during them, again

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<sup>69</sup> This idea of allowing something to happen organically refers to Stephen Wang's example of "Organicity", provided in Chapter 1.5.2., as a means of it happening naturally.

achieving my goal of raising awareness around the horrors that occurred in these various genocides.

The performers also emerged out of the process having developed somewhat. Performers who wouldn't go near the dirt at the beginning of the process were now rolling in it and being thrown to the floor and performers who had very held voices were beginning to release them. Most noticeable was that they were all less self-conscious about themselves, the performers at the beginning of the process who allowed their minds to inhibit them from moving and were fearful of engaging their bodies with the grotesque images of violence were no more. The performers in the final production had a new found confidence about themselves as performers, having the confidence to engage physically with the images and movements.

For me this was a reflection of my performers' total commitment to the performance but also that the process had an effect on them and they had learnt something from it and used this knowledge to develop themselves as performers.

As I move to discuss the second phase of *The Cleansing* (2013) there is still a major focus on the process as a means of appropriating and adapting Grotowski's performance theories/ actor training. Within this phase though I became more focussed on analysing the process to a greater extent, examining how I expanded and evolved the exercises of the first phase in the development of my own appropriated, Grotowskian based, acting methodology.

## CHAPTER FOUR

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### **“CLEANSING” THE PERFORMER: A PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION OF GROTOWSKI’S PHILOSOPHIES AND THINKING IN *THE CLEANSING* (2013)**

#### 4. Introduction

Negotiating the differences between the first phase of *The Cleansing* (2011) and the second phase (2013) will allow me to examine the on-going evolution of my appropriated Grotowskian acting methodology. Through a brief narrative of the second phase, detailing the look and feel of the production, I will provide a counterpoint through which to negotiate the differences between the first and second phase of *The Cleansing* (2011/2013). I will be looking at this second phase through the eyes of a director and facilitator, using Grotowski’s theories and practices to analyse the performer’s actions during the exercises and to expand on ideas and thinking brought up. These sections will culminate in a detailed analysis of some of the key processes of the second phase that resonate with my research around Grotowski’s performance theories/actor training and their appropriation into my acting methodology.

#### 4.1. Entering the Second Phase of *The Cleansing* (2013)

Phase two of *The Cleansing* (2013), performed in 2013, saw a major step away from the use of testimonies and the topic of genocide. I wanted to focus on stripping away everything of the first phase that I felt, after reflecting on it, was still superfluous, such as the paint, the witness testimonies and the use of costumes. Within the first phase these theatrical elements worked and served their purpose of aiding the performer in symbolically representing the grotesque horrors of genocide, creating a production that worked closely around what a Grotowskian production should, historically, look and sound like. The use of representational costumes, in the form of the paint on my performers’ bodies and the deconstructing of the actor/audience relationship, is key to Grotowski’s thinking around the *Paratheatre* phase, and the focus on the social ills of our society, which for me was the violence and brutality.

In the second phase I did not want to create a Grotowskian production, but rather, a production that was a physical manifestation of his philosophies and thinking; perhaps even a theatrical dialogue with some of Grotowski’s key ideas around *Poor Theatre*, *Paratheatre*

and *Theatre of Sources*. For example, based on Grotowski's thinking around the bodies lost connection to nature and the need to re-establish this connection through the *Theatre of Sources*, I focussed a section of the second phase on allowing my performer the space to 'play'<sup>70</sup> and find his connection to nature again. By the same thinking Grotowski talks about the *Innermost Self* (1968, 35) and expresses it as the place that holds our repressed emotions and painful memories (1968, 35). In the first phase of *The Cleansing* (2011) I focussed on having my performers delve into the *Innermost Self* in the process, but for this phase I wanted my performer not only to delve into this *Innermost Self* in the process but also to plot a physical journey for himself that articulates a stripping away of his personal barriers to uncover and deal with the painful memory of the death of his father<sup>71</sup>. Grotowski argues that theatre plays a therapeutic function for people in our present day civilisation (1968, 212), not from a psychological perspective, as I am not dealing with therapy per se, but rather a cathartic experience, in which the performance builds to a climax that should provide relief for the performer and audience by the end of it. This is what I had hoped to achieve for my performer, that we could create a performance that would be able to begin the healing process for him by helping him deal with the death of his father.



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<sup>70</sup> This notion of allowing my performer to 'play' refers to a Grotowskian *Theatre of Sources* idea of letting the performers "Just be" in nature without reasoning with what they are doing and why they are doing it. This idea of "just being" in nature will be examined further in Chapter 4.4.

<sup>71</sup> It is important to note that due to the intense nature of the work debriefings occurred after each rehearsal to allow Eugen a chance to speak about what he felt during the exercises and giving him a chance to release the emotions that were brought up.

Eugen Shezi was the only performer that I used in this phase of *The Cleansing* (2013). I first worked with him on the first phase, at the time he was the drummer for the production, but I was always captivated by the freedom of his movement and how he had a great sense and awareness of how his body flowed between movements. For me he displayed qualities of a Grotowskian performer in that he was flexible and able to use his body, he showed a total commitment to the performance, he held a connection to his history and cultural roots, and he was susceptible to trance. Eugen had the ability to go into an altered state of consciousness due to his involvement in traditional rituals that his family still performed. For me his ability to trance opened up opportunities for me to witness first hand the trance-like state that Grotowski alludes to, and develop a performance that uses Eugen's skill set to a greater degree than that of the first phase. The reason that I only used him is due to the uniqueness of his performance style, blending physical movement with trance, and the degree to which he already understood his own body and how he was able to push it beyond its own capabilities. I felt that for the purpose of creating my appropriated acting methodology he was the perfect candidate because of his traditional roots and his physicality which would allow us to access his ability to trance, in the creation of new exercises, and his physicality to expand on exercises used in the first phase. I aimed to develop a forty-five minute production that was able to hold the audience's attention and become a physical manifestation of Grotowski's philosophies and thinking, using only one performer. This proved to be a daunting task as it was only my second time working within the Grotowskian style and this time I had no text or testimonies to give Eugen, so the difficulty was to get Eugen to a place where he would be able to captivate an audience for forty-five minutes using only his body and the drum. Once we began the process though, Eugen proved that he would have no problem creating the performance and what follows is a narrative of what we created<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>72</sup> A live recording of the final performance of this second phase of *The Cleansing* (2013) has been included as Appendix B.



The audience walked into the same space as the first phase with a fire in the middle of the performance space and Eugen lying still on his back with his eyes closed by the fire, I was beating a drum softly in the background, eyes fixed on Eugen, shifting the audiences focus between myself and Eugen as they try and figure out what is going to happen next. Eugen was clothed in just a pair of black tights so as to aid the supple and subtle movements of his body to be expressed without the resistance of clothes. Once the audience was all in the space I stopped the drumming and Eugen started to move slowly. He slowly shifted his body on the floor making small movements that got bigger over five minutes. These slow movements caused some of the audience to become uncomfortable shifting on the floor and for me the reason for this is that they didn't know what to do in this situation. They were completely out of their comfort zones and not used to being confronted by a performance that began with no clear beginning.





Eugen sits up and opens his eyes as if it was the first time that he had seen the space around him, getting up slowly and feeling the ground below him. He then threw himself to the floor smiling and rolling in the dirt, digging up the grass and rubbing it on himself like a child playing in the garden. He climbed trees and smelled leaves embracing every aspect of the environment around him but his attitude changed with the beat of a drum. He looked towards a concrete block as if it were calling to him, slowly making his way to this concrete block where he began to apply white clay to his body.



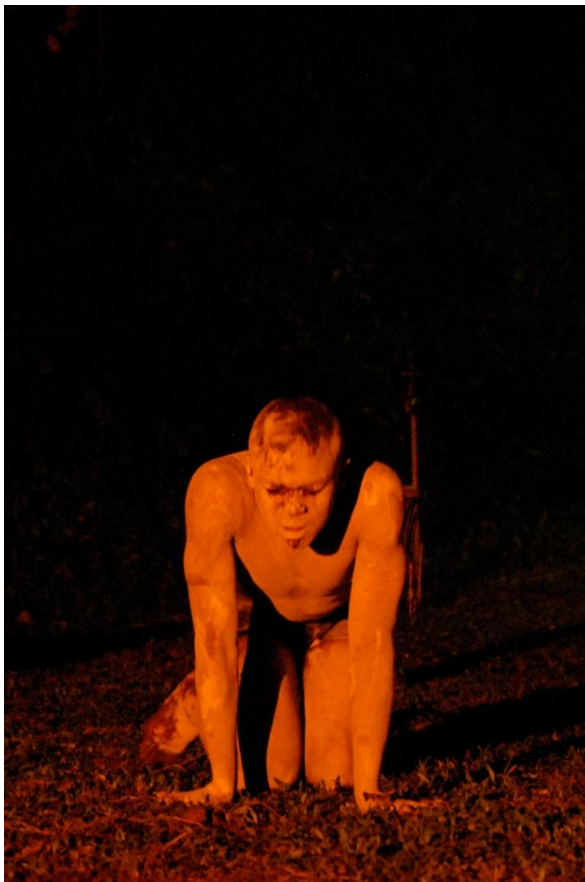
Each application of this white clay had to feel like a violation on his skin, becoming more erratic as the beating of the drum became louder and faster until I hit the drum one last time and put it down, moving into the audience to watch Eugen's own ritual that he devised for the purpose of dealing with the death of his father. He moves towards the drum picking it up off the floor and standing at the top of the performance space so all the audience can see him, he starts playing the drum one beat at a time building it and allowing, as Layne Redmond says, the body to begin to synchronize with the mind through the use of rhythmic drumming (1997). This will allow for the exploration of varying levels of consciousness according to Redmond (1997) and in the performance allows Eugen to become focussed as he begins to lower his personal barriers and allow an altered state of consciousness to occur within him. He moves down the grass and sits down at the far corner closing his eyes and playing the drum while singing, relaxing his mind and body through the repetitive singing and beat of the drum.



Putting the drum down and standing up he collapses back to the floor and begins to shift into his trance-like state. This state becomes very hard to describe and is one that has to be seen, but for me it was as if he lost control of his body for a few minutes, convulsing and



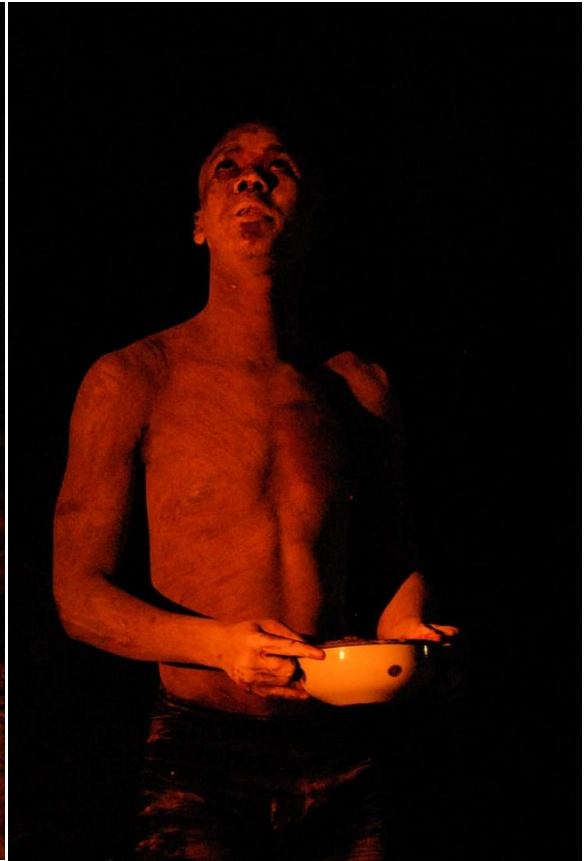
screaming high pitched sounds as he scratched at the floor and beat his chest. It was as if he lost a sense of himself, losing all inhibitions and just allowing the body to do what it wanted to do without thinking. In a Grotowskian sense this is an example of a freedom from the time lapse between mind and body in that the mind is turned off at this point and the body is moving according to the impulses of its subconscious (1968, 16).





For Eugen this trance was a way for him to deal with the early death of his father by channelling those emotions and memories into the trance. The trance releases repressed emotions held within the body through promoting an altered state of consciousness whereby the personal barriers and blocks that prevent these emotions from surfacing are eliminated. Once these emotions are released it brings about catharsis or relief for the performer from the strong repressed emotions or memories.

Eugen then ended his personal ritual through the burning of *mphephu* and then dousing himself in water, washing the clay off his body. He inhaled the *mphephu* as a means to ward off the negative energy associated with the repressed emotions, taking the smoke of the burning *mphephu* to each member of the audience, allowing it to drift around them and incorporate them in his ritual. This incorporation of the audience is important as the journey was as much for the audience as it was for Eugen but I will discuss this further in the next section.







As in the first phase I began above by offering a narrative description of the second phase of *The Cleansing* (2013) that details the look and feel of the production. I move on now to examine the reasons and meaning behind choices made in the production and further elaborating on this phase as a ‘personal’ journey for the audience.

#### 4.2. Watering the Physical Embodiment of Nature

The second phase focussed more profoundly on the use of the body in relation to the environment around it with a decision to release any kind of textual support. The process and preparation that went into this second phase focussed on the use of Grotowski’s *Paratheatre* and *Theatre of Sources* phases to release a child like physicality within Eugen that would be able to re-establish his connection to nature. The reason I use the idea of a childlike physicality is that in Chapter 1.5.3 I quoted Findlay and Filipowicz in saying that when we are children we observe everything around us new and as we grow up nothing is new anymore; it all looks the same way that it did the previous day (1986, 204-205). I also allude to this lost connection with nature in my director’s note stating:

It all seemed so simple when you were a child, you played and explored, everything was new to you, from the feel and smell of the leaves in the tree to the feeling of each blade of grass under your bare

feet... Somehow we forget this as we grow up, running through life never taking time to just stop and be. When last did you play in the dirt? Or stop to hear the sounds of nature around you? (2013)

My directorial and theatrical goal within this phase of *The Cleansing* (2013) around re-establishing the body's connection to nature led me to Grotowski's idea of "movement which is repose" (Schechner & Wolford, 1997:265). This movement is said by Grotowski to be one in which the mind and the body find stillness, the point where one gives up all their personal barriers and is able to move without thinking (Schechner & Wolford, 1997:269-270). For me this links to Redmond's idea of the relaxed state of the mind and body where, "Creativity, intuitive insight, healing & spiritual awareness contribute towards a condition of healing of physical, psychological and emotional wounds" (1997). This is the state of mind and body that I wanted Eugen to reach so that he could begin to heal the emotional and psychological wounds that the death of his father left on him, but at the same time Grotowski says that this state of mind and body is also when we are most open to viewing the world as new<sup>73</sup>. This idea of seeing the world anew is a counter point to the cynicism of contemporary thinking which is, arguably, about moving forward through life, thinking about the future without taking time live in the present. I thus attempted to use a technique of relaxation to aid Eugen in reaching a state of repose where he could focus on becoming present in his own body.

This performance was also about the audience's journey and for me this included having them reach a state of repose along with Eugen. This journey of the audience in the second phase of *The Cleansing* (2013) differs from that of the first phase in that I am not calling for the healing of the violence and brutality of our society, but rather I want the audience to go on a personal journey to find repose in their own lives, so that they may begin to stop and observe what is going on around them. I wanted to focus more on the inward violence in this second phase, that of repressed emotions and memories and the emotional wounds that they leave on the body, rather than the outward violence, in the first phase, associated with the brutality of genocides and humanity. Grotowski states that:

The rhythm of life in modern civilisation is characterised by pace, tension, a feeling of doom, the wish to hide our personal motives and the assumption of a variety of roles and masks in life (different ones with our family, at work, amongst friends or in community life etc). (1968, 212)

Grotowski also says that, "[t]he actor's act – discarding half measures, revealing, opening up, emerging from himself as opposed to closing up – is an invitation to the spectator" (1968,

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<sup>73</sup> This idea of new refers to Findlay and Filipowicz's example of a child stepping out into the garden for the first time and observing everything new (1986, 204-205)

212). By Grotowski's understanding if Eugen is able to open himself up to the audience and discard his personal barriers and reach a state of repose then it is an invitation for the audience to do the same. This is the reason that I structured the final performance in such a way that it would promote repose amongst my audience for the purpose of re-establishing their connection to nature.

Eugen began with a series of slow movements that got bigger over time. Examining this further this was used as a means to get Eugen into a state of repose through controlling his breath and using relaxation techniques taught to him during the process. The purpose of this relaxation technique was to relax his mind and body causing him to become present in his own body and more focussed on what is around him, providing the opportune conditions through which to re-establish his body's connection to nature, due to the ability of the body in this state to be at its most open to viewing the world as something new. The slow rhythm of the movements was also meant as a way to focus and calm the audience, in much the same way that slow controlled breathing relaxes the body. This slow rhythm was not only used in this beginning section though, but was a general note for the whole performance. I focussed on creating a slow rhythm to the performance that used small movements performed at a slow speed, for the purpose of counteracting the fast paced rhythm of our daily lives by providing the audience with an opportunity to be taken in by the slow pace of the performance and allow it to penetrate their personal barriers so that they could allow the feeling of repose to emerge itself in their bodies.

Eugen's personal ritual followed on from this section and for me is the most important part in his personal journey towards healing the psychological and emotional wounds left by the death of his father. The white clay that he applies to his body is one that is used in Xhosa culture by trainee diviners before their graduation to serve as a warning to others that they should not be approached during this time of required isolation (Anne Hutchings, 2007:197). It is also used in the traditional ceremony of circumcision where it is applied to young Xhosa boys as they go to the bushes/mountains and return 'men' (Hutchings, 2007:197). The white clay is used to alter the status of the individual that it is applied to, and in *The Cleansing* (2013) Eugen used it as a sign that he was going to begin his own journey and that he was preparing himself for entering an altered state of consciousness. By the end of the production this clay had hardened onto his body and had become a symbol of his journey towards healing himself emotionally and psychologically, forming a metaphoric layer of skin that held his insecurities and the painful memory of his father's death. That is why the final image

is of Eugen dousing himself in water and letting the white clay run off of his body and into the fire as a symbol that he is stripping away those memories and relieving himself of them.



As in the first phase of *The Cleansing* (2011) I appropriate elements of traditional ritual, using the white clay from traditional Xhosa culture and adapting it for the purpose of using it in a theatrical context. Eugen's use of trance is also appropriated from his own practice of traditional Zulu rituals with his family and adapted to be used as a means of catharsis. My reasoning for appropriating and adapting traditional ritual elements is that ritual for me is a full bodied experience that activates all the senses of the body providing an opportunity for Eugen to step outside of their sense of self and into an altered state of consciousness whereby the body is at its most vulnerable due to their personal barriers being stripped away.

Directorially I wanted to make *The Cleansing* (2013) a journey for the audience but not only towards a state of repose but a sense of catharsis as well. I had hoped to offer Eugen stripping away his personal barriers and every day mask in the trance as an invitation and message to the audience that it was alright for them to let down their personal barriers and join Eugen on the cathartic journey. Grotowski discusses this idea of the invitation: "The member of an audience who accepts the actor's invitation and to a certain extent follows his example by activating himself in the same way, leaves the theatre in a state of greater inner harmony" (1968, 46). For me this was another of the goals of the second phase of *The Cleansing* (2013), to have my audience leave the theatre feeling relaxed and relieved from the burden of repressed memories and emotions.

In the previous chapter I provided an analysis of *Indumba* (2013) choreographed by Fana Tshabalala of the Forgotten Angle Theatre Collaborative, and I alluded to the fact that this dance piece resonated with my second phase of *The Cleansing* (2013). Both performances focus on the appropriation of ritual. Tshabalala focuses on indumba which is traditionally a hut used in cleansing ceremonies, and adapts this idea in relation to his own thinking saying that for him it is the way in which the dancers create their own cleansing ceremonies (Hancu Louw, 2013). For me in *The Cleansing* (2013) I appropriate the use of the white clay in Xhosa ceremonies and use it as a means to create a metaphorical layer of skin for Eugen that holds his insecurities and repressed emotions about his father. These productions both focus on the idea of “cleansing” the performer as a means to allow our performers a safe space, with no judgement, where they would be free to express themselves. For Tshabalala this was the cordoned off part of the stage and for me it was the grass patch. Within both our spaces the performers were able to reach an altered state of consciousness where they could lose a sense of themselves even if just for a few minutes and come out of it with a feeling of relief.

Examining beyond the surface details of each production is an underlying technique of layering that focussed on creating a performance that utilised structured movement as a means to produce *Organicity* (Wang, 2012). As I said in the previous chapter, Tshabalala began with the dancers developing their own “cleansing” rituals, and then he structured these rituals together to form a choreographed dance piece. Within *The Cleansing* (2013) I used a similar method in that Eugen had to create his own “cleansing” ritual and then perform it for me and we would discuss it, keeping what worked and discarding what didn’t. By this method we were both able to produce performances that were choreographed, but as Grotowski says through this choreography the performance becomes a part of the performer’s body memory, allowing for almost no time lapse between mind and body due to the body unconsciously remembering what it has to do (Lisa Wolford, 2010:211). This works in much the same way as learning to play a guitar, at first you have to remember where all the chords are and how you have to apply your fingers, but once you have trained for a few years this becomes an unconscious reaction in that you know what the chords and don’t have to try and remember them, it is as if your fingers are moving on their own remembering for you.

The process of *The Cleansing* (2013) though is still the most important aspect of the performance, with the major difference of this phase being the heavy focus on including methods that utilised the core understanding of Grotowski’s *Paratheatre* and *Theatre of Sources* phase.



For me, the ideas and philosophies around the *Theatre of Sources* phase and *Paratheatre* phase have both formed a major contribution to the concept and exercises used in the second phase of *The Cleansing* (2013). I have not used both these phases in their full capacity, but rather adopted key ideas from these two phases that I was then able to adapt and base exercises off of. For example in the *Theatre of Sources* phase I chose to adopt two key ideas: one being re-connecting the body to nature and two, being the idea of “just being” in nature. This connection to nature became the overarching goal for the exercises outdoors and the “just being” in nature was the approach that I adopted when conceptualising these exercises<sup>74</sup> for Eugen.

From *Paratheatre* I then chose to adopt the idea of ‘meetings’<sup>75</sup> in that I began to think of my whole process as a *Paratheatrical* ‘meeting’ between myself and Eugen in that there was no director/performer relationship but rather a meeting or encounter between two theatre practitioners for the purpose of adopting and adapting Grotowski’s performance theories/actor training. I feel that *Paratheatre* influenced the structure of my process, for both the first and second phase of *The Cleansing* (2011/2013), and how each rehearsal was conducted by deconstructing my contemporary view of theatre, from rigid relationships, such as actor/director and actor/spectator, to an encounter between people. This thinking provides greater opportunity to evolve and expand my appropriated exercises, through discussions with Eugen and my performers, and makes an attempt to eliminate the actor/spectator relationship that blocks the audience from fully engaging with the performer.

#### 4.3. Awakening Through Relaxation

As in the first phase the relaxation aids in releasing the body of tension, making it easier for the performer to be open to completely giving himself over to the exercises.

The beginning of each exercise began with the same method of relaxation; Eugen would lie on a mat and breathe slowly in and out as I told him to forget about his day and what is to come, allowing his breathing to slowly calm his mind and body. I then had him tighten up each one of his muscles separately and then let them go, so as to release any tension in the body. Once he was fully immersed in the relaxed state, the exercise would begin<sup>76</sup>. These exercises will be detailed in the sections below and I have provided video excerpts from the

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<sup>74</sup> These exercises are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.4.

<sup>75</sup> This is a Grotowskian term, discussed in Chapter 1.5.3. , which means the encounter between people.

<sup>76</sup> This method of relaxation can be seen in Appendix C which is an excerpt from my rehearsal process.

rehearsal process, where possible, to aid in constructing a complete image of what the exercise looked like and what effect it had on Eugen's body.

#### 4.3.1. Awakening the Voice

New vocal ranges and volumes become awakened within the voice when the body is in a state of repose, due to the freedom of tension that usually inhibits the voice. The body also begins to move freely without the thought process and tension inhibiting it. Expanding on the exercise "rolling and release"<sup>77</sup> I wanted to demonstrate how this voice changes and transforms according to physical movement, based on Grotowski's notion that the voice emerges from the body (1968, 151).

Eugen had to begin by making small movements around the mat, exploring every nuance of his body against the mat. He had to feel every movement as if it was the first time using his body, building the movements, making them bigger as he becomes more confident in his body's ability, like a child learning to walk for the first time. The idea is to keep the performer moving until the movements begin to find an organic flow; referring to Grotowski's thinking around the *Plastiques* and organic flow, as the point where the body begins to transform its movements unconsciously and without thinking<sup>78</sup>. Once the performer has reached this state of *Organicity*, he has then formed a connection with his unconscious body (examined in the previous section) and is now able to add voice to the movement and witness how the voice beings to emerge out of the physicality, changing with every variation of movement. Although Eugen doesn't speak much in the performance or use his voice except for the small section of singing, I found that this exercise aided him in focussing and took him further into an altered state of consciousness. I wanted Eugen to be prepared for entering this altered state and have the required focus to see him through a forty five minute production.

Appendix D is taken a little ways into this exercise after the voice has been added and you can see in the video how the performer's body movement follows no logical thought pattern or structure but is just finding the flow between all the movements, allowing the voice to emerge out of it. As he lifts his arm and leg towards the ceiling the voice rises like a wave through his body and climaxes with a scream as his body shudders as if he were reaching into an altered state of consciousness. I then give Eugen the drum to add another dimension,

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<sup>77</sup> Discussed in Chapter 3.4.2.

<sup>78</sup> This idea of the *Plastiques* and organic flow was examined in Chapter 1.3.2.

finding how the physical beating of the drum and the sound of the beat permeates his body, causing a transformation of his voice. In the video you can see the transformation; his voice is able to reach different vocal ranges pushing it to high intensities without ever straining it. The reason he doesn't strain can be best understood through Grotowski: he argues that the moment the performer consciously listens to his voice for the purpose of changing it they, "Block the organic process and can give rise to a series of muscular tensions which, in their turn, prevent the correct emission of the voice" (1968, 133). It is because of Grotowski's reasoning here that I had Eugen start from a state of repose and begin to connect to his unconscious body so that he would not consciously think about placing his voice but rather let it happen organically.

This exercise around the organic movement of the body and release of the voice is one that I re-adopted in other exercises during the month long process as a means to get Eugen fully immersed in the unconscious body before beginning the exercise. I also used it as a means to develop his focus and preparing him for the length of time that he would have to remain within this unconscious body for the final performance. Grotowski wanted his performers to be fully committed and give of themselves completely and I felt that when Eugen was connecting to the unconscious body he was more susceptible to giving of himself to the exercise.

#### 4.3.2. Physically Composing

Grotowski used an exercise with his performers called composition in which the performers had to stimulate their imagination with an image and then transfer this to a physical composition in the body (1968, 110). This is an exercise in connecting the mind to the body in that the image is generated in the mind which has to stimulate the body into a physical form. Grotowski provides an example of one of these exercises saying:

By means of association with people, situations, memories, metamorphose yourself into a tree. The muscles react, expressing the personal association. To begin with, one concentrates these associations on one particular part of the body. As the reactions increase in intensity, the rest of the body is included. The vitality of this tree, its tensions, relaxations, micro-movements are nourished by the association. (1968, 110)

In my process/performance-led exercise, I wanted to stimulate Eugen's imagination for the purpose of taking him on a physical journey. The reason for this physical journey is that, like the performers in Fugard's *Orestes* (1971), Eugen had to "write" directly into the space

(McMurtry, 1998:109). By this I mean that he was given nothing but an empty grass patch with a fire and he had to take the audience on a journey, making them feel what he was feeling using nothing more than the physicality of his body. He therefore required the ability to physically manifest what was in his imagination so that he would be able to construct a physical journey in the final performance. It's about linking the image in the mind to a physical response of the body.

In order to aid Eugen in acquiring this ability I made use of numerous different physical compositions. He began by having to imagine someone in front of him who he really wanted to see again; I did not impose who this person was but left it open to him to decide. Eugen had to physically re-create the person that he chose, reaching out his arms and imagining that he was touching and looking at their facial features; I wanted to see who this person was through his physicality and how it affected his body and facial features. This exercise was used as a means to develop his ability to make the audience feel what he is feeling through his physicality which would become important in the final production where he would have no other means to express his emotions but through his physicality.

Appendix E is a video excerpt from the beginning of this composition and you can see how, when Eugen begins to reach out his arms to touch and feel the person's face, his whole physicality changes. A smile forms in his facial features and he feels the face with a sense of disbelief, he begins to breathe heavier and his body breaks just slightly turning disbelief into sadness. The person that he had chosen was his late father and the physicality then made sense to me, the overwhelming sense of loss but at the same time a happiness to be re-united with his father, even for that brief moment. This was the first time that I had heard about the death of his father and I could tell through his physicality and the emotional response that there was a lot of pain associated with the death of his father. It was at this point that both myself and Eugen decided that part of the final performance would deal with the repressed emotions around his father's death so that he could finally find some relief.

This image then shifted from his father to the desert. I, as director and facilitator, wanted to see the effects that different settings had on his physicality and mindset, for the purpose of developing his sense of reacting physically to mental stimulus, such as the image in his mind of a hot desert sun beating down on his head. He had to walk through the hot desert imagining how the sand would feel against his feet and the sun beating down on his body and how that affected the energy that he moved with. I then wanted to compare the desert setting

to an oasis in the desert to notice how the performer's energy shifts when he steps out of the hot desert and into the cool oasis. This entire stimulus was meant as a way for me to develop his sense of physicality, giving him the tools through which he would be able to successfully "write" into the space.

Appendix E also shows a video excerpt of the shifts in the imagined image, from desert to the oasis. Eugen's energy shifts as he imagines the hot desert sun, it causes him to move slowly and sluggishly allowing the imagined feeling of the sun to drain him of all his energy. An unforeseen reaction occurs once I describe the setting of the desert; he begins to associate the emotion of pain with the desert and almost as if to scream he opens his mouth and arches his back but nothing comes out. This association stems from the previous encounter with his father in that he was still holding onto that image when he stepped into the desert. The image of his father leaving him, transforms the dry barren environment of the desert into associations of pain and loneliness, demonstrating the transformative power of the mind to form emotive associations that can directly affect the physicality of the body.

As Eugen reaches the visualised oasis he collapses onto the floor and his energy shifts again to one of happiness, throwing the imagined water over his body and watching as all tension and sluggishness from the desert fades away, replaced with sighs of happiness and relief. Submerging his entire body in the imagined water his physicality shifts and he begins to move with a sense of freedom and relief. The physical shifts in Eugen's body due to his full commitment to the exercise. He had to fully immerse himself in both imagined settings so as to form the physical juxtapositions between them, such as the sluggishness and tension in the hot desert sun and the relief and freedom of the cool oasis water.

The final exercise within the compositions is one which I have already used within the first phase, the "Tiger" exercise. Following on from the previous composition exercises I had Eugen form an image of a tiger in his mind and he had to physically embody the image through his physicality, from the way he moved his back muscles down to the movement of each finger. In this way it differs from the first phase, in that he was not confined to a mat but allowed to move around the space on all fours finding the physicality of the tiger, like that of the Grotowskian exercise (1968, 145-148). Also like the Grotowskian exercise I used it as a means to release the voice and once the performer had found the physicality of the tiger, he had to roar and find how this roar emerges from the physicality of his body. The final video excerpt in Appendix E is Eugen embodying the physicality of the tiger; his shoulder blades

each move at different times positioning themselves higher than his lower back in a stalking motion and, as he moves forward on all fours, his hands contract and relax all the way through his fingers like the claws of a tiger. Beyond the physical though, his presence changed in this state, he seemed fearless and confident in the body of the tiger and when he roared the whole body resonated with the vocals. Grotowski calls this “total resonance” and refers to the notion that, “The most fruitful possibility lies in the use of the entire body as a resonator” (1968, 122).

Each of these exercises, expressed in the above two sections, would go on for at least forty minutes a session and began with the same relaxation method for each, so as to clear Eugen’s mind and expand and develop his ability to remain focussed and keep the connection with the unconscious body. After each of these sessions, which were done in the rehearsal room, the performer and I would move into the grass patch outside and focus on developing techniques around Grotowski’s *Paratheatre* and *Theatre of Sources* phases.

#### 4.4. Sourcing Nature’s Connection

These sessions outdoors would last between thirty and forty minutes, focussing on the *Theatre of Sources* notion of “just being” in nature, examined in chapter 1.4: as the idea of never reasoning with your actions in nature but just doing them. The performers in Grotowski’s *Theatre of Sources* would go on nature walks led by one of his disciples. Ronald Grimes describes one of these walks, saying:

Participants paused at transitions of terrain or foliage, honoured the sounds of animals, hugged trees, lay on the earth, crawled under dense pines, watched fish, ran through thickly entangled forest during the night, and walked under waterfalls. (As quoted in Schechner & Wolford, 1997:272)

For me all of my performance preparation /rehearsal work in nature happened at night as I felt that this was when nature was at its fullest in terms of sounds and silence in the area due to no-one walking around. Eugen and I would go down to the grass patch and I would focus on the *Theatre of Sources* notion of letting him “just be” in the space in that I wouldn’t tell him what to do or what we were there for, he just had to explore the space in his own way and in his own time. This exercise reflects my understandings that in our contemporary society we are always doing something whether it is watching TV or going to eat but very rarely are we ever not adding reasoning behind our actions. We watch TV because we are bored and we eat because we are hungry. This is why I wanted my performer to just go into

the space and do what he wanted, trying not to reason with any of his actions so as to break the mould of our contemporary society and aim towards a *Theatre of Sources* notion of “just being” in nature.

Unfortunately, because it was at night, there is no watchable video footage due to the low light so I will describe what occurred during these sessions in nature. Grotowski discouraged the romantic attachment to the beauties of nature but for me I wanted Eugen to become fully immersed in the environment around him and through this exercise I feel that he began to do that. He began to walk around the space smelling the leaves and swinging from their branches, throwing himself to the ground and rolling around in the sand, even taking the time to just stop and listen to every sound around him from the bats in the tree to the rustle of the leaves in the wind. I also noticed that as he immersed himself in the environment around him, he began letting go of any thoughts in his head embodying the sounds and sights around him, allowing them to guide his movement around the space.

Eugen and I also played a game in the space that Thomas Richards calls “Watching” (1995, 56). It was basically a long game of follow the leader in which he would have to follow me through the environment, matching my tempo and gestures while at the same time not making any noise. If I moved left he would have to move left, if I moved my arm he would have to move his arm but at no point should I hear his footsteps or any part of his body. This exercise is a means to develop Eugen’s focus and attentiveness through him having to watch my movements while also focussing on his own light footedness so as to not make a sound. It also allowed for a connection to nature to begin forming in that the reason no sounds were allowed to be made is so as to not disturb the natural sounds happening in the environment around us. This connection to nature is very important, as I have already said, in that I wanted to re-establish Eugen’s connection to the environment around him.

In most cases the performer couldn’t hear how loud he was moving and I had to tell him often to walk lighter but as he began to focus, he almost matched my movement as I was doing it, reading the impulse<sup>79</sup> of my body.

This exercise takes on the format of a *Paratheatrical* meeting in that both Eugen and I have left the rigidity of the rehearsal room in favour of the outdoor setting. In chapter 1.4 I described Grotowski’s reasoning behind moving into *Paratheatre* as the act that our lives

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<sup>79</sup> My understanding of the term “impulse” refers to the intention to do something before you do it.

have become based on routine to the point where we are beginning to hate ourselves and losing any spark of life (1973, 115). This reasoning of Grotowski's is what lead me to the creation of this exercise attempting to structure it as a meeting between Eugen and myself as I aid him in disarming himself in nature. Of course it is not on the same scale as Grotowski's *Paratheatre* meetings due to the lack of other people and a structure outside of society but I'd like to think that the intention of myself and my performer meeting in the grass patch at night, so that he could disarm himself and through this form a connection with nature, is one that resonates with Grotowski's intentions around *Paratheatrical* 'meetings'.

Repeating this exercise though, as well as the others that I have discussed in relation to the second phase of *The Cleansing* (2013), can be detrimental to the development of the performance due to this type of performance requiring freshness to it. By this I mean that the performer must look as though he is letting down his barriers for the first time and stepping into the unconscious body. The repetition of having him go into the unconscious body for a long period of time breeds a familiarity about it that causes the act of going into the unconscious body to become choreographed. Once the act is choreographed then the initial emotional responses that developed organically within the body will be lost, in much the same way that modern plays can be over-rehearsed to the point where the performers know the play so well that they perform it mechanically, missing a lot of the subtle nuance that gives the play life. To rectify this problem, I proposed to Eugen that we take a break from these exercises to focus on smaller exercises that developed his sense of balance and strength. These are two elements that are important in physical performances as the stronger the performer is the less likely he is going to get injured, and balance exercises play an important role in strengthening the core muscles that aid in back and spine support.

#### 4.5. Constructive Break

To be able to be involved in a physical performance core strength and fitness are two of the key areas that need to be worked on during the process. Due to time constraints I wasn't able to incorporate fitness and core training into my process but I did use one day to teach Eugen techniques and exercises that he could use in the future to strengthen his body.

Having used Hatha Yoga as a form of exercise, I found that it strengthens the core muscles of the body as well as providing flexibility, controlled breathing and an all round functional body that is not bulky and un-agile. These are all benefits that are vital in the training of a



physical performer so that it reduces the chances of injury as well as providing a more malleable body capable of doing what you want it to. Pilates is also another form of exercise that strengthens the core muscles and provides the same physical benefits as yoga.

Hatha Yoga and Pilates were the two methods that I wanted to use when training Eugen during that day. I taught him Yoga *asanas* that would not only strengthen his body but develop his sense of flow and balance. Grotowski also used Hatha Yoga in his process, stating that, “Certain yoga positions help very much the natural reactions of the spinal column; they lead to a sureness of one’s body, a natural adaptation to space” (As quoted in Wolford, 2010:208). Eugen had to cross his left leg over his right leg forming the number four with them and then lower himself from this position into a one legged squat while raising his arms above his head. This posture requires balance and the activation of the core muscles to stabilise the body and hold it still. We also used the Pilates ball as an added difficulty having to use his core strength to balance on the ball during the exercises. For example, he had to lie with his back on the ball and his feet on the ground then do sit ups on the ball while balancing his body so that it remains still. This develops core strength as well as abdominal strength in the performer through the activation of his abdominal region and core muscles underneath it to stabilise himself on the ball.

Incorporated with Yoga and Pilates, I added the use of Grotowski’s corporal exercises in that they allow for the performer to build trust in their body, which is the first step towards working without fear<sup>80</sup>. I began with the simple use of rolls, having Eugen lower himself to the floor and roll across it using the technique of rolling across the muscle running diagonally on his back. This technique provides less contact of the spine with the floor and thus the chances of him straining his spine become minimal. He had no problem with this exercise, so we moved forward focussing on the riskier corporals of headstands and shoulder stands. He had to focus on finding his equilibrium in the headstand and shoulder stand that would stabilise his body and keep him from falling over. The exercise was a means for Eugen to examine the use of his body and decipher which muscles were being activated when attempting to stabilise his body and where the centre of balance is located for the purpose of staying up on your head or shoulder and not falling over. Learning to become physically intuitive and inhabit the physical body becomes important within the actor training of Grotowski in that he wanted his performers to be able to decipher all the problems of their

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<sup>80</sup> Grotowski’s corporal exercises were discussed in Chapter 1.3.1.

bodies and work towards fixing them (1968, 35)<sup>81</sup>. When Eugen began the headstands and shoulder stands, he battled to get his legs into the air but as he repeated the exercise he began to find where the problems in his technique were and slowly he began to get his legs in the air for few seconds before falling over. He played with the positioning of his hands and holding his butt and thigh muscles for the purpose of stabilisation, deciphering his body and finding the reason why he is falling over so that he may correct it.

Ideally what I had hoped to achieve through this break was to allow Eugen a chance to step outside of the unconscious body and leave it for a while so that it could regain its freshness. Due to the intense psychological power needed to stay within the unconscious body I feel that this constructive break is a necessary step in this process, allowing Eugen the time to reflect on what he had learnt in the previous exercises and allow the unconscious body to become new to him again.

I acknowledge that one day of exercise in Yoga and Pilates is not enough to strengthen the body, but I wanted to use it for the purpose of showing Eugen how he could improve his strength for future performances. The corporals then gave him the opportunity to decipher the problems of his body allowing him to figure out solutions to these problems, aiding him in his future development as a performer. My reasoning for referring to these exercises as his future development is that this break also marked the end of the process of physical and mental development, so these exercises were skills that he could use in his own time to develop himself as a physical performer. The last step of the process was for Eugen to use what he had learnt through the various exercises and infuse this into our structure of creating a ritualised physical embodiment of one's connection to nature and the painful journey that one must face when confronting our inner selves.

#### 4.6. Laying the Path Towards the Final Journey

For the purpose of keeping the final performance fresh the process of developing the performance was done over a period of four days in which Eugen did most of the guided improvisation process, with my role now being one of guided outside eye. He was given a weekend in which he had to construct a physical journey. This physical journey refers to my use of Grotowski's composition exercises, in that Eugen had to create movement that was able to physically express his body's connection to nature and his own personal journey of

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<sup>81</sup> The deciphering of the body for the purpose of actor training is examined in Chapter 1.3.

dealing with the death of his father. I then directorially watched and guided the journey that he had created, picking aspects of it that worked and keeping them for the purpose of developing them further, and discarding the other aspects that didn't work.

The first physical journey that Eugen presented had many aspects about it that worked, such as the use of the drum in aiding him into getting into the trance-like state and a sequence of movements which he presented while in trance. The issue I had is that he began the performance in the trance-like state meaning that the performance had nowhere to build to. Separating the use of trance and the use of the drum from this first attempt, I felt that he and I would be able to theatrically expand on these, finding different ways to incorporate them into the final performance journey.

We jointly decided to split the theatrical and performance journey into three sections: the beginning phase which had Eugen slowly getting into a state of repose; the second phase which had him forming a connection with nature while in a state of repose; and the final phase which had him going into the trance-like state which would end in a sense of relief.

Each section was worked on individually and constructed using exercises that we had used during the physical and mental development process. The first section was based on the idea of awakening the body through relaxation discussed in chapter 4.3. The difference with the way it worked in this section is that Eugen was in charge of his own relaxation, I couldn't be there to guide him through it. Like in the physical and mental development process he then had to move while in the relaxed state finding how his body moved organically and building this to a climax whereby he awakens from this movement and sits up. The reason for building the state of repose is that I wanted him to sit up at the end of it and almost have a different view of the world because of his connection with the unconscious body.

Section Two was then based on the *Theatre of Sources* idea of just being in nature. Eugen, within this section of the final performance, swung on branches and played in the sand, finding the physicality of a child exploring the garden for the first time. Having already found this physicality many a time during the process we only went down to the space once so Eugen could refresh his mind as to what it felt like to be outside in the environment again, re-connecting him to the sounds of the space and the feel of the grass against his skin. This section was based on embodying Eugen's connection to nature and was completely improvised, allowing the performer to play in any way around the space that he felt was right on the night. The reason the movement was improvised is that the performer should view the

space anew every performance and through this understanding it would cause him to move differently due to the embodied connection to nature guiding his movements.

Section Three was based on the first physical journey that Eugen presented to me. We used the idea of going into the trance-like state but added the putting on of the white clay before this, using the composition exercise of chapter 4.3.2. to aid him in physically imagining that the white clay is a violation of his body imposing insecurities and painful memories on it. I wanted to use the composition exercises here as a means to aid Eugen in finding how the image of the clay as a violation of his body affected his physicality as he applied it to his skin. Each touch of the white clay against his skin caused his body to tense up losing the physical freedom that he had in the previous section. The use of the trance was then used as a means for Eugen to strip himself of these barriers and begin the healing process through the performer completely releasing his body and voice, moving erratically and wild with a complete sense of freedom, allowing all the different vocal ranges to emerge from this wild physicality and building the movements and voice into an uncontrollable frenzy until it climaxes. It is through this complete release that he is able to emerge at the end of the trance with a feeling of relief. This trance was something that Eugen had to work through himself due to its deeply personal nature and the fact that he had to be fully immersed within it for it to work. The only thing that I could tell him is whether or not I also felt a sense of relief at the end of the trance.

Each of these sections may seem that they are structured and that I played a major role in the development of the theatrical journey, but it was Eugen who negotiated the workings of the journey – how he moved in the space, when he was ready to stop moving in the relaxed state and whether or not he had reached the trance-like state - I only provided him, as director and facilitator, with the exercises that he could use in this negotiation.

#### 4.7. Conclusion

I feel that within this second phase of *The Cleansing* (2013) I really began to focus on appropriating Grotowski's performance theories/ actor training to a greater degree of success. This is partly due to my knowledge of Grotowski having expanded since the first phase, allowing me to explore to a greater degree what he had aimed to achieve through his actor training. I also read more on Grotowski's *Paratheatre* and *Theatre of Sources* phases which provided me with greater knowledge of how he negotiated the workings of an outdoor space.

For me I really wanted to strip down the previous phase of *The Cleansing* (2011), not that there was anything wrong with it, but it was two years later and my thinking around Grotowski had changed. I was now interested in Grotowski's philosophies around nature and his expression of the *Innermost Self* as the repressed emotions and memories of people. I felt that the only way for me to negotiate these ideas through *The Cleansing* (2013) would be to strip it back to the bare basics of one performer, a fire, an outdoor setting and an audience. This allowed me to focus more of the process around developing Eugen's physicality due to there being no textual work and only one performer, who already had an awareness as to his own physicality.

During this process Eugen was one of the most exciting performers that I had worked with in that he took to the exercises very easily, finding the emotions within his physicality and pushing himself beyond his physical and mental level. He always came in to every rehearsal with a positive attitude and a total commitment to give of his all in every exercise, and as a result he began to develop as a performer. I saw him drop his personal barriers opening up to me about the death of his father and he wasn't afraid to let his vulnerable side show.

Grotowski says that the toughest thing for a performer is to drop his every day mask and reveal the vulnerable being underneath it (1968, 35). I feel that when Eugen stepped into the altered states of consciousness during the process the energy in the room shifted and you could feel how his voice soared to different vocal ranges, emerging from his body. There were times that he was so deep within the altered state of consciousness that I felt everything that he was feeling just through the sound of his voice.

Comparing the two processes of *The Cleansing* (2011/2013), both phases, although very different, share a commonality in the acting methodologies developed during the process. They both focussed on using exercises that were based on the core premise of Grotowski's training or theories, such as using Grotowski's understanding that the performers need to rid themselves of insecurities during the actor training and creating my own method that uses a visualised journey up a mountain to reach this goal. As much as I adapted Grotowski's training and in some cases used my own methods to reach similar goals to that of him, the core framework and understanding of his training as not being a method remained the same. Grotowski states in relation to actors that,

We want to learn means: how to play? How best to pretend to be something or someone? . . . But if one learns how to do, one does not reveal oneself; one only reveals the skill for doing. And if someone looks for means resulting from our alleged method, or some other method, he does it not to disarm himself, but

to find asylum, a safe haven, where he could avoid the act which would be the answer. (As Quoted in Wolford, 2010:202)

The development of my acting methodology kept this understanding as the core idea when conceptualising every one of the exercises. Each exercise should never tell the performer how to do anything but rather provide a platform through which the performer could negotiate the workings of his/her own body. For example, when I used the “Tiger” exercise I did not tell the performers to get angry and release themselves of timidity. I confined them to a mat, had them take on the physicality of a tiger and beat a drum near them. I set up the environment that could aid in the release of their timidity, but in the end the performers had to negotiate how this exercise affected them personally. The same is true for each of the exercises; I refrained from ever telling the performer to do anything besides what the exercise required them to do. Grotowski says that the key to performer training is the understanding of, “Something stimulates you and you react: that is the secret. Stimulations, impulses and reactions” (1968, 185). The exercises in my acting methodology were the stimulation which then generated impulses within the performers’ bodies to which they could react. For example, the use of composition exercises uses the imagination to stimulate different impulses within the body such as sadness which results in an outward reaction of a change in physicality.

By no means should this chapter be read as a definitive actor training method because, like Grotowski, I don’t believe in the use of a method for developing a performance; I prefer to look at it as a series of exercises that have the ability to change and adapt according to who the performer is and what the intention of the production is. Each performer is different, with their own insecurities and tensions and the exercises will need to evolve and change according to the requirements of the performer and production.

These two phases of *The Cleansing* (2011/2013) have begun my fascination with creating a dialogue with Grotowski’s performance theories/ actor training such that it might offer some positive ideas and processes to be built on for future theatre work.

## CONCLUSION

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This dissertation has established the adaptability of Grotowski performance theories/actor training and has provided two documented rehearsal processes and productions, in the form of the two case studies of *The Cleansing* (2011/2013), that examines my key research question of, “How Grotowski’s performance theories and actor training could be adapted for use in developing my own appropriated acting methodology in post-apartheid South Africa”.

This dissertation provides a detailed examination of Grotowski’s *Poor Theatre* phase, *Paratheatre* phase and *Theatre of Sources* phase that is referred back to countless times in the various chapters of the dissertation. In Chapter Two these initial examinations are used as a means to form links between Grotowski’s performance theories/actor training and *Orestes* (1971) and *Woza Albert!* (1983). This was done as a means to prove the adaptability of Grotowski’s theories and training. In some cases these links are already documented, such as the unpublished interview with Percy Mtwa (1984) that details, both his, and Mbongeni Ngema’s work with Grotowski’s book *Towards a Poor Theatre* (1968). In other cases though I have analysed Grotowski’s performance theories/actor training alongside the productions so as to form my own links, such as in *Indumba* (2013) where the links were formed between my observation of the dance production and my knowledge of Grotowski’s theories around *Paratheatre* and *Poor Theatre*. This becomes a useful practice within this dissertation in that it refers me back to the initial performance theories of Grotowski, analysing them and forming links, which is what I had to do in the two case studies of *The Cleansing* (2011/2013).

In the context of South African theatre I felt it necessary to plot a brief development of the apartheid legislation as an embodied system of laws; using Merleau-Ponty’s definition of ‘embodiment’ as a way of experiencing the world around us (Cavallaro, 1998:88) and Foucault’s understanding of the body as a site of struggle (Loots, 2010:88). These two theories provided for discussions around apartheid as an embodied system, that laws dictated the view of the black South African Body and how black South Africans experienced the world around them. It also indirectly prompted discussions around the use of Grotowski’s style of theatre in apartheid South Africa, in relation to the need of black South Africans to develop a physical style of theatre that aimed to resist the dominant discourses imposed on them by the apartheid legislation.

Chapters One and Two covered these theoretical concerns above and provided for a counterpoint in which I could refer back to when discussing the two phases of *The Cleansing* (2011/2013). This dissertation is structured in such a way that all the theoretical groundwork discussed, could be related back to my theatre production *The Cleansing* (2011/2013). This structure is indicative of a performance-led research methodology, in which the performance is led by the artistic research, which in this case is my theoretical groundwork.

The two phases of *The Cleansing* (2011/2013), structured within two case studies, allowed me to discuss each phase separately, plotting the journey and development of my own Grotowskian appropriated acting methodology from its inception all the way through to its use in the development of a Grotowskian inspired production.

These case studies are a theatrical dialogue with some of the key ideas of Grotowski's performance theories/actor training. I had hoped that, through this dissertation, I could begin putting this dialogue down on paper, so that it could possibly be seen by more people who could have suggestions as to the further development of my process or be inspired to go on a similar journey of creating an appropriated acting methodology.

Working from a South African context, I am confronted with performers who are trained in a predominantly realist style of theatre and while this is not a criticism, I see it rather as an opportunity to train them and aid them in developing themselves as performers. I notice that performers are constantly confronted with the dilemma that their bodies on stage are saying one thing to the audience but their voices are not reflecting their body language. This separation of body and voice is due to the utilisation of acting methodologies that favour the use of the psyche or the body but not one that focuses on the utilisation of the body in relation to the voice; as Grotowski's does.

Through the use of my appropriated acting methodology, I hope to begin developing performers and giving them the tools by which they can start to bridge the gap between mind and body, aiding them in becoming less inhibited performers. I feel that the media we surround ourselves with daily is promoting more performers who are insecure about their own bodies due to magazines and adverts that set the benchmark as to what body type you have to have in order to be considered beautiful or good looking. People who don't meet this benchmark are then generally considered not beautiful or good looking, causing insecurities to manifest about the way you look. These insecurities, as argued and explored in this dissertation, then form tension in an actor's body which in turn affects their voice and it is for



this reason that my acting methodology appropriates Grotowski's performance theories/actor training. Through this methodology I have aimed and continue to work to not only develop actors as performers but, in true Grotowskian whole body experience, also aid performers in their everyday lives by helping them to overcome their insecurities and blockages/obstacles.

I conclude by offering this open ended acting methodology to future performers and theatre makers in the hopes that it will be picked up and used; evolving the exercises and methodologies laid out in this dissertation and prompting a continued use of Grotowski's performance theories/methodologies in actor training in South Africa.

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Unknown Interviewer. 1984. *Interview with Percy Mtwla*. Unpublished Interview



## APPENDIX A

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### Jewish Holocaust Section

*Trudge in singing song*

*Wetzt die langen Messer auf dem Bürgersteig,*

**Sharpen the long knives on the pavement,**

*laßt die Messer flutschen in den Judenleib.*

**Let the knives stab into the Jews body.**

*Blut muss fließen knüppelhageldick*

**Blood must flow extreme extensive**

*und wir scheißen auf die Freiheit dieser Judenrepublik*

**And we shit on the freedom of this Jewish Republic.**

*Reach end and go into cattle cart*

*Breathe sigh of relief*

*Start beating sequence*

**Jason:** They selected three hundred men to be separated, and we were loaded into trucks. We were taken to Auschwitz 3. Right away [we were] herded in a room where all our civil clothes were taken off. We were shaved, all the hair removed, our bodily hair removed. It went so fast, everything, and all the work was done by other prisoners. See, the guards would stand by, but all the dirty work was done by fellow prisoners. We were naked, we took a shower, and then I did get my number tattooed, which is 117022. This was suppose to be my name. I had no name anymore. That was it.

**Maddi:** We were let into a barrack [and] ordered by the SS to undress completely. In front of us were three large, huge barrels- empty barrels. And then we were ordered to throw the clothes into one barrel, the shoes into the next barrel, and the jewelry into the third barrel. Then we were led into an adjoining room. There I saw several stools lined up. Behind each stool a woman prisoner, was shaving every prisoner's head bare, including the underarm hair and the pubic hair. We stood in a line now, completely naked. The soldier, the SS men, stood right next to it, looked us up and down, and giggled and made remarks.

**Yolanda:** We were all little groups of Jews in the woods. I ran into a group of Jews, maybe twelve, fifteen. And there was a cousin of mine with her children, a little girl of four or five and a little boy of maybe eight, ten, eleven months. And he had a voice. It was such a raspy voice. It was impossible. And in the woods, when a child cries it really rings out, and the Germans would come. So the group of Jews said to her, "look Teitle. You can't be in the woods with this child. Either get away or kill him." She became wild there was no choice. I saw her put the child in the swamp. With her foot on his neck, she drowned him.

**Cami:** My brother died in my arms. My younger brother ... [*long silence*] and my husbands two sisters. There was not enough oxygen for all those people. They kept us in those wagons for days. They wanted us to die in the wagons. You know the cattle cars with very little windows? He wasn't even bar mitzvah. So you know, when my brother died in my arms, I said to myself, "I am going to live. I must be the only survivor from my family. I'm going to live." I made up my mind that I'm going to defy Hitler. I'm not going to give in. Because he wants me to die, I'm going to live.

*Yolanda steps out to do slam poem*

*Maddi, Jason, Cami dance*

**[INSERT SLAM POEM]**

## **Rwandan Genocide Section**

*Everyone goes to get their machetes*

*Sharpens it through the audience and to their seats*

*Sharpens through this*

**Maddi:** On the morning of 15 April, they sent me to see one of their daughters who lived at Iryanyuma. I had to walk for about half an hour, but I passed through Nyamirambo market because I wanted to avoid the roadblock. It was terrible to see life going on as normal, people buying and selling, while other people were being raped and killed. I passed through the market with my head down, then I heard a woman's voice calling my nickname. 'Kiki, did you know your mother was taken to the river with the others?' I looked at the woman; she was talking as if it was good news. There was a kind of mocking in her voice. I looked at her and said, 'Oh, really.' (**CHANGE TO MAKE IT FIRST PERSON**)

*Sings Hutu Song*

**[Kill them, kill them, kill them all; kill them big and kill them small! Kill the old and kill the young... a baby snake is still a snake, kill it, too, let none escape! Kill them, kill them, kill them all!]**

**Jason:** Why are you calling on God? Look at all of them out there... Hundreds of them looking for you. They are legion, and you are one. You can't possibly survive- you won't survive. They're inside the house, and they're moving through the rooms. They're close, almost there...They're going to find you, rape you, cut you, kill you!

*Sings Hutu Song*

**Yolanda:** Dead bodies are everywhere. Mothers have seen their babies chopped in half, their features ripped from their wombs... and you think you should be spared? Mothers prayed for god to spare their babies and He ignored them- why should He save you when innocent babies are being murdered? You are selfish, and you have no shame. Do you hear them? The killers are outside the door- they're here for you

*Sings Hutu Song*

**Cami:** I know some of the killers very well. One of them wanted to rape my sister, but he didn't succeed. I know the people who took them away. They were our neighbours, among them a man called Benoit who had been our neighbour for years and owned a shop nearby. He was Mum's friend and he even used to lend her money for me to go to school. They got on very well. He was one of the leaders of the group that took them. And there was another young man called Kanani – Mum had been his teacher in primary school. Some people inside the compound tried to fight off the killers, but it was Kanani who held on to Mum when they

took her out of the house. Later, he let go of Mum's hand and she ran away. But they found her again and she was beaten to death with clubs. (**CHANGE TO MAKE IT FIRST PERSON**)

*Chaos breaks out as one person at a time put their paint on and sing Genocide song which builds until the final hit on the drum.*

Eugene: If God put his legs down here on Rwandan soil, people would cut them off!

*Everyone stabs machetes into the ground and walks towards fire*

### **Bosnian Genocide Section**

*They stalk Maddi until she is in position*

*Maddi is standing by herself and Jason walks up to her and puts paint down her legs*

**Maddi:** They ordered us to take off our clothes. If we refused, they said, they would rip our clothes off our bodies. Three of us refused; their clothes were ripped with knives.

We stood in a circle, naked. They just sat, drinking and smoking. They ordered us to walk in a circle. We did for about 15 minutes while they drank and feasted their eyes. Then it started.

Strangely enough, instead of each taking his pick, they all approached one girl and started raping her. This took place on a rock in the yard. The other girls just watched, cried, begged. But the men were deaf and mute.

I was third in a row. They approached me, and I started begging them not to touch me. "Hold it!" said one of them. He looked at me and asked, "Young lady, do we know each other from somewhere?"

"No," I answered. I had never seen him before.

"How can that be?" he said. "Your boyfriend is a member of Bosnia-Herzegovina's Territorial Defense!"

I looked at him and said quietly, "My boyfriend is not a member of TD!"

Then he screamed, “You’re lying, Turkish whore!” and pulled a photograph out of his pocket. It was a picture of me with Dado, in front of the school that housed the TD headquarters. They must have taken the picture from a car.

The man who stood to my left hit me on the back twice with the butt of his rifle, and then both men started beating me. I fell. Then the worst started.

I was first raped by the one with the photograph. I fought, screamed, pulled his hair. He hit me on the mouth, and my lower lip started bleeding. I fainted. When I came to, I was raped again. I can’t describe it. The pain was horrible. While I was still conscious, I was raped by eight of them, and I don’t know what happened afterward.

*Maddi falls to the floor*

*Cami and Jason gang up on Yolanda*

**Yolanda:** Three Chetniks entered our house. They were drunk. One of them hit my mother, cursing and speaking in a threatening manner. He said that we would remember who they are and that we will regret the day we were born. I trembled. My sister Sanela clung to me, crying. When we went out, I realized that she had wet herself.

That day they rounded up all the women and young girls. As we passed through the village, I saw corpses, people dead in their own yards. Some of the houses were burning — the Chetniks had set them on fire. It was pandemonium. They looted the houses. They smashed the windows of the food market, fighting among themselves for the few bottles of booze.

The White Eagles would come to get us every night. They would bring us back in the morning. There were nights when more than 20 of them came. That seemed to be some kind of honor. They did all kinds of things to us. It cannot be described, and I don’t want to remember. We had to cook for them, and serve them, naked. They raped and slaughtered some girls right in front of us. Those who resisted had their breasts cut.

There were women from various towns and villages. There were more than 1,000 of us. I spent more than four months in that camp. It is a nightmare that cannot be talked about, or described, or understood.

I would have killed myself, because death is not as horrible as the treatment I suffered. I cannot talk about that.

Sometimes I think that I will go crazy and that the nightmare will never end. Every night in my dreams I see the face of Stojan, the camp guard. He was the most ruthless among them. He even raped 10-year-old girls, as a delicacy. Most of those girls didn't survive. They murdered many girls, slaughtered them like cattle.

I want to forget everything. I cannot live with these memories. I will go insane.

*Jason attacks Cami and carries her to her spot*

**Cami:** That day, several Chetniks arrived. They were looking for valuables and asking questions about the men who were hiding in the forest. One of them, a man around the age of 30, ordered me to follow him into the house. I had to go. I was terribly afraid, although I had no idea what was going to happen to me. I only knew that any resistance would jeopardize my relatives' lives.

When we entered, he started looking for money, jewelry and other valuable objects. He could take anything he wanted. He wanted to know where the men were. I didn't answer. Then he ordered me to undress. I was terribly afraid.

I took off my clothes, feeling that I was falling apart. The feeling seemed under my skin. I was dying, my entire being was murdered. I closed my eyes. I couldn't look at him. He hit me. I fell. Then he lay on me. He did it to me. I cried, twisted my body convulsively, bled. I had been a virgin.

He ordered me to get up. I wanted to collect my things so I could cover my body. He told me to be careful because my family's destiny depended on me. He went out. First he looked around to make sure nobody was looking, and then he invited two Chetniks to come in. I cried. The two repeated what the first one had done to me. I felt lost. I didn't even know when they left.

I don't know how long I stayed there, lying on the floor alone, in a pool of blood. It seemed as if the past, the present and the future had blended, as if one were nowhere and everywhere,

living in a state of nonexistence, simultaneously dead and alive. A twilight zone between the known and unknown.

My mother found me. I couldn't imagine anything worse — my mother finding me under such humiliating circumstances. The truth slapped me on the face. I had been raped, destroyed and terribly hurt. But for my mother, who all the time had an idea of what had been going on, this was the greatest sorrow of our lives. We both cried and screamed.

Afterward, everything seemed foggy and dreamlike: being transported to Trnopolje, then 30 kilometers to Travnik over Mt. Vlasic. Only then did I come out of a dreamlike state. Why did this happen? Why did it have to happen to me?

My mother helped me immensely. I, too, would like to be a mother someday. But how? In my world, men represent terrible violence and pain. That feeling is stronger than me. I cannot control that feeling.

*Jason walks to his spot followed by Cami, Yolanda and Maddi who go do their dance*

**Jason:** On the territory of the country in which I was born, shooting from firearms was usual when celebrating the birth of a male child. These shots tell you everything, what a new male member of the family means and what is expected of him - strength, protection; he should be a warrior, a soldier, the head of the family, as they say in our parts. Unfortunately, when other kinds of shooting started in the former Yugoslavia, shooting in war, it was normal for every man, every male child, to put on a uniform, take up a weapon, and go to protect his homeland, his nation, and ultimately his family. This was expected of him. This was his role, a sacred role.

There was no choice. You could be either a soldier or a traitor. At the beginning of the war, it seemed as if the war and all it brought with it was impossible, that this wasn't really happening to us, and that everything would be resolved within a few days, and that finally our generation would have a chance. We didn't even notice how we were drawn into the vortex of inter-ethnic hatred and how neighbours were no longer able to live beside each other, how death moved into the vicinity, and we didn't even notice that we had got used to it. Death became our reality.

Unfortunately, it became everyday reality. Who before that could have believed that the horrors of war would have become everyday reality? Who could have believed that they could become a part of our lives? Surrounded with horrors, we got used to them and went on living like that. Among those horrors, things happened that were done by people who knew each other, people who, until yesterday, had lived almost as family members together. In Bosnia, a neighbour means more than a relative. In Bosnia, having coffee with your neighbour is a ritual, and this is what we trampled on and forgot. We lost ourselves in hatred and brutality. And in this vortex of terrible misfortune and horror, the horror of Srebrenica happened.

I am here before Your Honours because I wish to express my remorse. I have thought for a long time, and I'm always followed by the same thought - guilt. I find it very hard to say this truth. I am to blame for everything I did at that time. I am trying to erase all this and to be what I was not at that time. I am also to blame for what I did not do, for not trying to protect those prisoners. Regardless of the temporary nature of my then-post. I ask myself again and again, what could I have done that I didn't do? Thousands of innocent victims perished. Graves remain behind, refugees, general destruction and misfortune and misery. I bear part of the responsibility for this.

There is misfortune on all sides that stays behind as a warning that this should never happen again. My testimony and admission of guilt will also remove blame from my nation because it is individual guilt, the guilt of a man named Dragan Obrenović. I stand by this. I am responsible for this. The guilt for which I feel remorse and for which I apologise to the victims and to their shadows. I will be happy if this contributed to reconciliation in Bosnia, if neighbours can again shake hands, if our children can again play games together, and if they have the right to a chance.

I will be happy if my testimony helps the families of victims, if I can spare them having to testify again and thus relive the horrors and the pain during their testimony. It is my wish that my testimony should help prevent this ever happening again, not just in Bosnia, but anywhere in the world. It is too late for me now, but for the children living in Bosnia now, it's not too late and I hope that this will be a good warning to them.

In our wartime sufferings, no one has come out as the winner; everybody is suffering now.



On all sides, there is still pain. What has won the victory is misfortune and unhappiness, as a consequence of blind hatred. The spirit of this unhappiness still hovers over our Bosnian hills, which have suffered so much, and it will take years to wipe out the traces of this horrible war and to have smoke rise again from people's chimneys, from the hearths, and maybe decades will have to pass before the wounds in people's souls are healed. If my confession, my testimony, and my remorse, if my attempt to face myself contributes to the quicker healing of these wounds, I will have done my duty of a soldier, a fighter, a human being, and a father

*Jason goes to the fire where everyone else is already and they start the Cleansing Ritual*

## **Cleansing Ritual**

*They start chanting*

**WITH FIRE WE CLEANSE OUR WEAPONS**

**WITH WATER WE HEAL OUR WOUNDS**

**IN THE EARTH WE BURY OUR DEAD**

**AND WE BREATHE THE SMOKE TO FORGET**

*Jason stands up and does his piece while the others hum under him*

I stand. I stand with tainted palms, an inherited stain that will not wash away. The sins of my ancestors ripping through my flesh, gouging out my eyes, hacking me into pieces. Yes, *my* ancestors. Mine, and yours. For if we say we are human, but cannot be humane, we bare the blame together, heavy on our shoulders. If we look away, if we choose not to see, choose not to do, then we wield the machete as well. If we cannot speak out, if we will not speak out, then we are the ones who pulled the trigger. Politicians can speak out, but their words are blanks, far less powerful than the bullet ripping through her flesh, your flesh, my flesh. The screams of the powerless resonate through our history, but each time, we turn a deaf ear. Each time, we fail to hear. Or choose not to listen. The tattoo of gunfire fills our ears, but the screams of the child holding the weapon somehow elude us. We see the smoke billowing, but are blind to the flames that burn, and scar, and kill. We feel the breeze on our skin, and think of beauty and joy, but that same breeze carries the stench of rotting flesh away from us. And what's left? The metallic taste in the back of mouths: the blood that we pretend does not exist. The blood that lines every metre of claimed land, every memory of each survivor. The blood that blemishes our future before it has even begun. But this time, we can choose to take notice. This time, **we can choose to listen, choose to see, and choose to do.** This time, **we can choose to say no.**

## **APPENDIX B**

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## APPENDIX C

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## APPENDIX D

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## APPENDIX E

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